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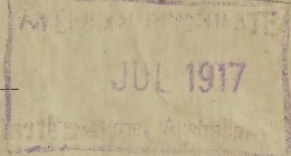
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[ISSUED THURSDAY, 2ND AUGUST, 1917.

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COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA. *Parliament*



# PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES.

SECOND SESSION, 1917.

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# SEVENTH PARLIAMENT:

SECOND SESSION.

## Governor-General.

His Excellency the Right Honorable Sir RONALD CRAUFURD MUNRO FERGUSON, a Member of His Majesty's Most Honorable Privy Council, Knight Grand Cross of the Most Distinguished Order of Saint Michael and Saint George, and Commander-in-Chief in and over the Commonwealth of Australia.

## Australian National War Government.

(From 17th February, 1917.)

Prime Minister and Attorney-General	.. .. .	The Right Honorable William Morris Hughes, P.C.
Minister for the Navy	.. .. .	The Right Honorable Joseph Cook, P.C.
Treasurer	.. .. .	The Right Honorable Sir John Forrest, P.C., G.C.M.G.
Minister for Defence	.. .. .	The Honorable George Foster Pearce.
Vice-President of the Executive Council	.. .. .	The Honorable Edward Davis Millen.
Minister for Works and Railways	.. .. .	The Honorable William Alexander Watt.
Minister for Home and Territories	.. .. .	The Honorable Patrick McMahon Glynn, K.C.
Minister for Trade and Customs	.. .. .	The Honorable Jens August Jensen.
Postmaster-General	.. .. .	The Honorable William Webster.
Honorary Minister	.. .. .	The Honorable Littleton Ernest Groom.
Honorary Minister	.. .. .	The Honorable Edward John Russell.

## Senators.

*President*—Senator the Honorable Thomas Givens.

*Chairman of Committees*—Senator John Wallace Shannon.

<sup>1</sup>Bakhap, Thomas Jerome Kingston (T.)  
 Barker, Stephen (V.)  
 Barnes, John (V.)  
 Bolton, Lieut.-Col. William Kinsey (V.)  
 Buzacott, Richard (W.A.)  
 Crawford, Thomas William (Q.)  
 De Largie, Hon. Hugh (W.A.)  
 Earle, Hon. John (T.)  
 Fairbairn, George (V.)  
 Ferricks, Myles Aloysius (Q.)  
 Foll, Hattil Spencer (Q.)  
 Gardiner, Albert (N.S.W.)  
 Givens, Hon. Thomas (Q.)  
 Grant, John (N.S.W.)  
 Guthrie, Robert Storrie (S.A.)  
 Guy, James (T.)  
 Henderson, George (W.A.)  
 Keating, Hon. John Henry (T.)  
<sup>1</sup>Long, Hon. James Joseph (T.)

Lynch, Hon. Patrick Joseph (W.A.)  
 Maughan, William John Ryott (Q.)  
<sup>1</sup>McDougall, Allan (N.S.W.)  
 Millen, Hon. Edward Davis (N.S.W.)  
 Needham, Edward (W.A.)  
<sup>1</sup>Newland, John (S.A.)  
 O'Keefe, Hon. David John (T.)  
 O'Loughlin, Lieut.-Col. Hon. James Vincent,  
     V.D. (S.A.)  
 Pearce, Hon. George Foster (W.A.)  
 Plain, William (V.)  
 Pratten, Herbert Edward (N.S.W.)  
 Reid, Matthew (Q.)  
 Rowell, Col. James, C.B. (S.A.)  
 Russell, Hon. Edward John (V.)  
 Senior, William (S.A.)  
 Shannon, John Wallace (S.A.)  
 Thomas, Hon. Josiah (N.S.W.)



a reasonable anticipation that such will be the position in the near future.

Debate (on motion by Mr. J. H. CATTS) adjourned.

### ADJOURNMENT.

AUSTRALIAN IMPERIAL FORCE: TRANSFER OF RECRUITS FOR TRAINING PURPOSES: PAY—CITIZEN FORCES: PAY AND TECHNICAL TRAINING OF TRAINEES.

Motion (by Mr. WATT) proposed—

That the House do now adjourn.

Mr. CHARLTON (Hunter) [10.15].—I desire to bring under the notice of the Minister representing the Minister for Defence a practice that has been adopted by the military authorities of bringing recruits from New South Wales to Victoria for training purposes. I had occasion to bring the matter under the notice of the House about sixteen months ago, and there was then some little improvement effected; but the Defence Department are again drifting back to the old method. It is unfair to the lads who enlist in New South Wales to drag them to Seymour to be trained. I would not complain if there was any good or sufficient reason to advance for this action, but I am assured by the recruits that they get no drill that they could not secure in their own State. This system causes a good deal of dissatisfaction, which does not tend to help recruiting. On the last occasion on which I brought the matter forward, mothers who had come all the way from New South Wales to Melbourne to see their sons before they embarked, called to see me. To-day I find that the same practice is followed as much as ever. The New South Wales recruit runs a very great risk when he is brought to Victoria and is kept here for several months for training purposes. The climate of New South Wales is much warmer, and there is less rainfall in that State. At Seymour the rainfall is fairly constant, and there are different samples of climate every day. The result is that lads from New South Wales contract colds, and probably pneumonia and other complaints. The people over there get to hear about these things, and when they realize that there is a chance of lads having to leave New South Wales and come to Victoria for training, it retards recruiting. Parents are opposed to the transfers that have

taken place. They claim that the lads should be permitted to remain in their own State until they have to embark. It is of great advantage to a soldier to remain in his own State when he is undergoing his training, because there he is among his own people and his own friends, and when he gets leave at the week-end he can return to his home and see his parents or his wife and family. I have heard several complaints on this score. A recruit from New South Wales has pointed out that he has to be back in Melbourne on the Monday. Leaving on the Friday night he gets to his home at 6.30 p.m. on Saturday night, and he must leave on his return at 2.30 on the following afternoon. If he is not back in Victoria on the Monday he is fined. In the case of another recruit from Maitland, he gets to his home at 8 o'clock on the Saturday night, and he has to leave on his return at lunch time the following day. There is no good reason why men who enlist in one State should be dragged to another for the purpose of being trained. I ask the Honorary Minister what justification there is for this practice that is now growing up again? The Government should instruct the military authorities that men who enlist should be trained in their own State until they embark, unless some good reason is advanced for taking them into another State. If there is any special reason, of course, we must give weight to it, but, in the absence of any such special reason, I can see no justification for the practice that is followed. It is a great injustice to the parents of the recruits and to the soldiers themselves.

Mr. MAHONY (Dalley) [10.22].—I wish to bring under the notice of the Honorary Minister the case of a number of apprentices at the naval establishment at Garden Island. These boys were called out for a compulsory parade on Anzac Day for the purpose of stimulating recruiting. On previous occasions when they were called out for a compulsory parade they received a day's pay, but on this particular day, when one of the most glorious things every member of the community could do was to stimulate recruiting, the Government stopped the pay of these boys. It amounted to 1s. 8d. per day. I am referring to the Naval Workyards at Garden Island, Sydney. There are



only about half-a-dozen boys concerned, and the expenditure involved in making the alteration which I suggest would certainly not strain the financial resources of the Commonwealth. Indeed, the matter is such a paltry one that I do not suppose the Minister has any knowledge of it. These boys certainly ought not to be penalized when called out on compulsory parades for the purpose of stimulating recruiting. I may also mention that these workyards were taken over by the Commonwealth from the Imperial authorities. In the days when they were under the direct control of the Admiralty the apprentices employed there were privileged to attend technical classes at night-time, and to permit of them doing this they were allowed to catch an earlier boat from the island to the mainland—a boat which left at 4.20 p.m. This privilege has now been withdrawn, and they are compelled to wait for a boat till about 5.15 p.m. They have then to go home, and effect a change of dress, by which time it is too late for them to reach the technical schools to resume their duties. The country is thus being deprived of a distinct benefit, inasmuch as these apprentices were gaining technical knowledge, and fitting themselves to become skilled tradesmen.

Mr. WEBSTER.—How long has the change been effected?

Mr. MAHONY.—Since the present Government took office. I hope the Minister will see justice is done in these matters.

Mr. WEST (East Sydney) [10.27].—I desire to support the remarks of the honorable member for Hunter in regard to the granting of leave of absence to recruits who hail from New South Wales. I placed myself in communication with the Defence Department upon this subject, but the replies which I received were very evasive.

Mr. GROOM.—Has the honorable member a reply with him?

Mr. WEST.—Yes. The mothers of these lads feel that the weeks prior to their embarkation they might reasonably be kept in training in the State to which they belong. I know that it is idle to appeal to the military authorities on this question because there is none of the milk of human kindness in them. The small concession for which I ask would exert a great and beneficial effect on recruiting. I wish

also to point out that if a lad is recruited in Sydney, and is brought to Victoria for the purpose of being trained, four months must elapse before he is granted leave of absence to enable him to revisit his home. I think that the Minister will be carrying out the wish of Parliament if he endeavours to keep recruits within their own particular State, and to afford them an opportunity to see their parents as often as possible while they are being trained.

Mr. GROOM (Darling Downs—Honorary Minister) [10.31].—I am advised that men are not sent into training camps outside their own State unless there is some good and valid reason for doing so.

Mr. WEST.—The correspondence does not show that.

Mr. GROOM.—That at all events is the information I have received. I shall bring under the notice of the Minister what has been said by the honorable member for Hunter and by the honorable member for East Sydney, and shall make further inquiries; but I am informed that recruits are not unnecessarily taken out of the State in which they enlist. There is no advantage to be gained by doing so. The desire is that the training shall be carried out as far as possible in the States in which the men enlist; but in dealing with large bodies of recruits, and with various arms to be trained, regard must be had to efficiency, and the men must be sent where the most effective training can be secured. In some cases, even after men have been transferred, readjustments may be necessary, and, as the honorable member has said, some of them are occasionally returned to the States in which they have enlisted. The Minister, however, sympathizes with the view that as far as possible the men should be trained in their own State, and kept as close as possible to their own homes.

Mr. WEST.—When I spoke to an officer on the subject on one occasion he said, "What do the men want to see their mothers for?"

Mr. GROOM.—While such a statement might have been made by an individual officer, it is not to be taken as representing the attitude of the officers generally. No one is in sympathy with such an idea. The Department realizes that it is dealing with men who have feelings and emotions which should be studied and considered. I have made a note of the matter to which



the honorable member for Dalley has referred, and shall, as desired, bring before the Minister the two cases he has mentioned. The honorable member for South Sydney referred this afternoon to a regulation which he said had only recently come into operation, and which deals with the question of forfeiture of pay. The position is that soldiers while abroad may commit certain offences, for which they are punished by deductions being made from their pay, and that in some cases where such men have subsequently lost their lives it has been found, when the settlement of their affairs has taken place, that deductions have to be made in respect of such penalties. I understand that the procedure is not a new one, but results from the Defence Act, which provides for forfeiture of pay in certain cases. A modification of the regulation has been made, but solely with the object of bringing it into conformity with the Act. I shall, however, bring the matter under the notice of the Minister.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

House adjourned at 10.35 p.m.

## Senate

Friday, 27 July, 1917.

The PRESIDENT took the chair at 11 a.m., and read prayers.

### PASSPORTS TO WOMEN.

Senator McDougall. — Has the Leader of the Senate any information in reference to the question I asked recently regarding the issue of passports to ladies?

Senator MilLEN. — I have received from the Minister for Home and Territories a statement, which reads as follows:—

I have read Senator McDougall's remarks in the Senate yesterday regarding the issue of passports to women, and am in receipt of the letter from Mrs. Freeman which you forwarded. In that letter, Mrs. Freeman makes certain statements which were not before the Department when her application was previously under consideration. The papers at that time disclosed no facts amounting to specially urgent reasons for an exception being made to the rule which prohibits (except in

cases showing exceptional strong reasons, such as of health, or urgent domestic necessity) the travelling of women through the danger zone; but the assertions now put forward are such that I have decided to give consideration to the new facts stated. The officers in Sydney will be instructed to make inquiries, and I shall apprise Senator McDougall so soon as I have considered their report.

With regard to the honorable senator's remarks generally, it is incorrect to say that ladies are permitted to visit Great Britain for pleasure purposes. All cases of ladies who, from their application appear to, or who may, have special justification for visiting Great Britain at the present time, are submitted to me personally, and have been the subject of very close and anxious consideration on my part. But you can assure the honorable senator that no discrimination whatever was made between classes of people, and certainly no passports have been granted when the object of the visit was believed to be mere travelling for pleasure.

The case of Mrs. Holman, to which special allusion is made by the honorable senator, affords no illustration of a departure from our rules. The facts are: Mrs. Holman applied for a passport to Great Britain; her application was strongly pressed, but, in view of the Secretary of State's instructions referred to, I declined to authorize the issue of a passport to England. At that time there were no restrictions on women travelling to Ceylon, and when a request was made to me to issue passports to Mrs. Holman and her sister for Colombo, I saw no reason why they should not be granted. The responsibility for the extension of her passport beyond Ceylon does not rest with this Government.

Senator KEATING. — Arising out of the reply, I wish to ask the Vice-President of the Executive Council if there was any foundation whatever for the suggestions, if I may so call them, which were made when Senator McDougall raised this matter, as to a differentiation in the case of the wives of certain gentlemen in Australia?

Senator MILLEN. — There is no ground for the suggestions. The position is that there is a prohibition against the issue of passports, except in very special circumstances, to ladies wishing to travel through the danger zone. There is no prohibition against ladies going to Ceylon. Mrs. Holman applied for a passport to Colombo, which was granted to her, as it would be to anybody else who applied. That was not one of the prohibited places, and any woman is entitled to put in a similar application.

Senator McDougall. — No ladies are given passports in London.



## WHEAT STORAGE BILL.

## SECOND READING.

Debate resumed from 26th July (*vide* page 487), on motion by Senator RUSSELL—

That this Bill be now read a second time.

Senator SHANNON (South Australia) [11.5].—In moving the second reading of this Bill yesterday, the Honorary Minister gave to the Senate the assurance that it is not to be considered as the first instalment of the bulk handling system. Having had that assurance, I wish to know whether he is of the opinion that the States are going to continue the Pool system when we have returned to normal times in Australia? But, whether he is of that opinion or not, I predict that when Australia does return to her normal conditions, the wheat pool will be a thing of the past.

Senator RUSSELL.—I hardly think that that statement represents what I said. What I said was that it would be possible to adapt this storage system to bulk handling, but that it did not compel the States to adopt bulk handling.

Senator SHANNON.—Does the Minister say that this Bill is not to be considered as the first instalment of bulk handling?

Senator RUSSELL.—Of course it is. That system could be adopted, but it is not compulsory on the part of any State to adopt it.

Senator SHANNON.—Then it will be advisable for those States to which bulk handling will not be advantageous, not to have any silos built, for this all-sufficient reason, that, in any State where bulk handling will not be in existence under normal conditions, the silos would be absolutely vacant or not in use. That is the point which I wish to submit to the Senate most emphatically.

We are asked to approve of the expenditure of £2,850,000 on the erection of silos which, in ten years' time, will be practically lying idle. If that is likely to be the case, I suggest that the Senate ought to think, not twice, but even thrice, before it sanctions the expenditure of such a large sum, just to stand the chance of lying idle in the course of ten years.

We are told, also, that the silos are to be constructed for the purpose of preserving the wheat sold to the Imperial Go-

vernment. This is the 27th July, and, within four months from this date, the new crop in Australia will be being reaped.

Senator SENIOR.—That is in South Australia.

Senator SHANNON.—I venture the opinion that, within four months of this day, under normal conditions, the new wheat crop of Australia will be in progress of being harvested. I predict that, if this Bill should be passed through all its stages here to-day, very few of the proposed silos will be fit to be occupied before the new crop becomes available. If, however, the new crop should be available to the silos, I hold that it would not only be folly, but sheer madness, on the part of the Government to put into a silo one grain of the wheat which is already stacked. Why? Because a large part of that wheat will have been in stack for two years, and the greater portion have been stacked for one year. We are told that, after wheat has been in stack for two years, it more or less deteriorates in value. To put old wheat into the silos when new wheat was available would, I repeat, be nothing short of madness. Therefore, the stacks now in existence—the bulk of the wheat has already been sold to the Imperial Government—will have to remain where they are, whether silos are built or not.

The question more particularly for the Senate to decide is this: Under normal conditions, is wheat as well preserved in stacks as it could be in silos? Yesterday, the Honorary Minister quoted to us no less an authority than the Prime Minister of Canada. I do not question for one moment the opinion of that authority as to what may be done in silos, but I ask honorable senators to take the authority of their own eyes. Let them examine the wheat stacks and judge for themselves. We have, fortunately, the opinion of Mr. Hagelthorn, a member of the Wheat Commission, and a gentleman who has given as much attention to this question during the last twelve months as has any living man, not only in Australia, but, probably, in the wide world. He is undoubtedly a man of authority, and, addressing a conference of dairymen yesterday, he said—

At Geelong, there were 4,000,000 bags of wheat, and not a mouse in them. There was



not one-tenth of 1 per cent. that was not of f.a.q. condition. At Williamstown, there was not a bag in bad condition, and no mice. Seven million bags were stacked at Brooklyn, and they had got all the wheat at the seaboard except 1,000,000 bags.

Need we go to the Prime Minister of Canada, or anywhere else, for information on this question, when it is here at our own door? Within six hours, any honorable senator can investigate wheat stacked in Australia, and see the condition it is in after the expiration of nearly two years.

Senator RUSSELL.—Surely you realize that wheat two years old is in danger of developing weevil? How do you propose to prevent or cure that?

Senator SHANNON.—If I thought for a moment that the expenditure of this sum of £2,580,000 would save Australia from the weevil likely to attack this old wheat after being in stack for two years, I would not have a word to say against the proposal. But, let me remind the Honorary Minister again that not one grain of the wheat in the stacks would find its way into a silo. It would be sheer madness to put old wheat into a silo. Why? No authority can say when weevil will attack wheat in stack. You cannot smother weevil. You can attack wheat which is likely to be infected with weevil. You can put old wheat into a bottle and seal the bottle, and still weevil will make its appearance.

Senator RUSSELL.—You are absolutely wrong.

Senator SHANNON.—I am absolutely right. This point has been decided more than once in South Australia. I have seen there a sample of wheat which had come from England in a bottle. It was held in an office where I have the privilege of presiding now and again. The wheat was put in the bottle for six months; the bottle was corked and sealed; but any time the bottle was shaken, weevil in abundance could be seen. Therefore, what is the use of the Honorary Minister talking about stifling weevil?

Senator GUY.—Has that been confirmed by an authority, do you know?

Senator SHANNON.—I am telling the honorable senator what I know is an absolute fact. If I cannot believe what I have seen with my own eyes, I am not going to believe any other authority. I know that

in some districts there are wheats which, if put in normal condition in a bottle and sealed, weevil will make its appearance in the bottle. Irrespective of what the Honorary Minister has said, this can easily be put to a test at any time he likes. He must recognise that, if wheat stacks two years old are likely to be attacked with weevil, it will be a thousand times better for the wheat to remain in stack than to be put into a silo. Why? Because, if the stacks are attacked by weevil, then, in the breaking down of the stacks, the weevily portion can be dealt with separately, and the other wheat can be dealt with on its own; whereas, if the old wheat is placed in silos, and has to be aerated, as the Minister explained yesterday, I venture this opinion that, if the wheat is attacked by weevil in the silos, the second state of the wheat will be a long way worse than its first state. By the revolving of weevily wheat through a silo, not only would you have one corner weevily, but you would have weevil throughout the silo. No one recognising these facts would think of putting the old wheat into the silos.

Mr. Hagelthorn has told us, and, indeed, we can see for ourselves, what is going on in connexion with our wheat stacks. Wheat can be stored in bags and preserved for a lengthened period, so long as they are protected from the weather. I venture the opinion that if it had not been for the mice plague we should have seen nothing of this Bill. The Assistant Minister does not deny that statement. I tell the honorable senator that, before the ink of the signature of the Governor-General assenting to this measure is dry, the mice plague of 1917 will be a thing of the past. This is not the first time that Australia has been visited by a mice plague. Twenty-three or twenty-four years ago we suffered from such a plague. The mice were so bad at that time that they were even eating live pigs in their sties.

Senator BARKER.—I should have thought that the pigs ate the mice.

Senator SHANNON.—The mice were in such numbers at that time that they attacked pigs in their sties. Once that plague disappeared there were no mice to be seen for quite a number of years. I believe that when the present plague has



run its course Australia will be free from the mice plague for a number of years to come. When the first plague occurred some people in South Australia, being under the impression that there would be a regular recurrence of the plague, had their sheds protected by the erection of mouse-proof fencing. This was simply done by putting up plain iron fences around the bottom of the sheds. This made the sheds absolutely mice proof. As there was no reappearance of the plague the fences were kept in order only for a few years, and most of them were not in a condition of repair when the plague reappeared this year. This is characteristic of the Australian people.

We have had experience of many droughts in Australia, and when one overtakes us we say that we shall be able to combat a drought should one overtake us again. Our experience, however, has been that, when a drought does overtake us, we are just as unready as ever to deal with it. Perhaps it is just as well that our people should be so forgetful of these things, as otherwise they would be in trouble all their lives. Before I left South Australia on the last occasion, to attend the Senate, I met a gentleman who is a resident of one of the mice-infested districts of the State, and he gave me his assurance that there is now not a mouse to be seen in the district. This is a sign of the disappearance of the present plague. It is not remarkable that the mice plague should have caused greater ravages to our wheat than upon any previous occasion, because this year we have had greater stacks of wheat for the mice to work upon. This is no reason why the Government should introduce panic legislation involving the expenditure of £2,850,000 for silos to protect wheat against the ravages of mice. This is asking intelligent men to do an unreasonable thing. Let me tell honorable senators that much of the damage that has been caused to our wheat, as a result of the mice plague, is due to the fact that our wheat has been protected from the weather by roofing nailed to the stacks, and not by roofs independent of the stacks themselves. Under the system of roofing which has been adopted as soon as the mice attacks the stacks they take away the support of the roofs. The stacks sagging

*Senator Shannon.*

because of the ravages of the mice cause the roofs to sag, and so make channels which, in wet weather, run the water into the wheat. The best way in which to save the wheat as much as possible is, therefore, to immediately remove the roof of a stack which has been attacked by the mice. If the stacks had been protected by the erection of independent roofing the damage done by the mice would have been unimportant.

I agree with the Assistant Minister that there is much greater danger to Australian wheat from the ravages of the weevil than from the mice, but I do not agree with him that it is possible to prevent damage by weevil by the establishment of silos. The very last thing that should be done is to put old wheat into the silos. Let me remind honorable senators that if the ravages of the mice had not been so serious as to justify the statement that our wheat stacks have suffered from a mice plague, the agents, who have control of the wheat, would have been responsible for the whole of the damage. As it has been accepted by those in authority that the damage has been caused by a plague, the agents have been relieved of responsibility for that damage. If the Commonwealth Government now propose to come to the assistance of the agents by the expenditure of £2,850,000 on the erection of silos, I say that the protection of our wheat could be secured for a very great deal less than that sum by the erection of shelter sheds with roofs independent of the stacks. Such sheds would be all that would be necessary, and they would last practically for all time.

Senator RUSSELL.—The agents have never accepted responsibility for more than twelve months.

Senator SHANNON.—A great proportion of the wheat now stacked has not been there for more than eight months, and the agents would be responsible for the damage to that wheat if the Government had not admitted that there was a mice plague.

Senator RUSSELL.—Over 7 per cent. of damage done by mice is declared to be due to the plague.

Senator SHANNON.—Until Australia has declared in favour of the bulk handling of wheat the Senate will, in my opinion, make a grave mistake if it



authorizes the building of the proposed silos.

Senator BARKER.—Will not this measure help the bulk-handling system?

Senator SHANNON.—We may not decide to adopt the bulk-handling system in Australia, and then we shall have these silos on our hands.

Should we not adopt the bulk-handling system, and should the wheat pool not continue in normal times, we shall have these silos on our hands. We should first consider whether Australia is to be committed to the bulk-handling system.

Senator RUSSELL.—What is the honorable senator's definition of Australia?

Senator SHANNON.—I speak of the six States of Australia.

Senator RUSSELL.—A majority of four have declared for it, and the other two are indifferent because they have not much wheat.

Senator SHANNON.—The representatives of one of the four States declaring for it went off at half-cock. They were opposed to the opinion of their own Government, who have refused to approve of the system. When it is shown to be possible and practicable to ship wheat from Australia in bulk to any port, it will be time enough for us to talk of adopting the bulk-handling system. The Government should try to prove that wheat can be shipped in bulk before making such a proposal as is now under our consideration.

Senator RUSSELL.—I might mention that we made the necessary tests in our own ships last year.

Senator SHANNON.—And we have not heard a word about it.

Senator RUSSELL.—Yes; I gave publicity to the matter through the newspapers. We made the test in two of our own ships.

Senator SHANNON.—This is the first I have heard of it, and, in my opinion, honorable senators were entitled to the information when the Minister introduced this Bill.

Senator RUSSELL.—The whole of the public were given the information through the press.

Senator SHANNON.—Although we have been told by the Minister that this is the first instalment of bulk handling.

Senator RUSSELL.—I did not say anything of the sort. I said it was optional

for any State to go on and adopt the system.

Senator SHANNON.—I accept the honorable senator's denial. My ears must have deceived me.

I should like to point out that the wheat held in stacks by the Pool amounts to no less than 145,000,000 bushels. By the time the proposed silos are erected, we shall have reaped another harvest from what, it is admitted, is likely to be a normal crop, and this will give us another 145,000,000 bushels. That being the case, before the new crop is harvested we shall have sufficient storage accommodation for only one-third of that crop, without providing storage for a single grain of the 145,000,000 bushels of wheat already in the hands of the Government. If we adopt the bagging system for two-thirds of our wheat production, and silo only one-third of it, obviously the cost of the dual system will be much greater than that of a single system. That fact has been pointed out to the Prime Minister by the Farmers and Settlers Association of South Australia.

Senator RUSSELL.—Look at the alternative. We shall have no wheat to put in either bags or silos unless we do something.

Senator SHANNON.—I fail to recognise the pertinence of the Minister's interjection, seeing that he must know that we shall not be able to put into the silos which it is proposed to erect a solitary grain of the wheat that is already stacked in Australia.

Senator RUSSELL.—I assure the honorable senator that I do not know that. I think that the wheat which is nearest to deterioration will be the first put into the silos.

Senator SHANNON.—If that course be adopted, we shall simply distribute the weevil already in our stacks throughout the silos, and consequently the sooner we reject this Bill the better. I am sure that the Minister, on reflection, will recognise that if the plan he has suggested be followed wheat attacked by weevil will be put into the silos.

I would further point out that the erection of silos at the present time will probably cost about 40 per cent. more than they would in normal times.

Senator PLAIN.—Not necessarily.



Senator SHANNON.—At any rate, they will cost a great deal more than they would in normal times. Yet to-day there is an enormous quantity of iron belonging to the wheat pool which for a tithe of the expenditure proposed could be put into roofs over our wheat stacks, thus preserving the grain just as effectually as it can be preserved in silos. For this reason I think that the Senate should reject the Bill and impress upon the Government the wisdom of expending this money in the erection of rain-proof sheds throughout Australia. If the measure be carried, South Australia has emphatically declared that she will not adopt the system of bulk handling.

Senator NEEDHAM.—Will not that State obey the law?

Senator SHANNON.—It will not be the law. Only yesterday the Minister stated that any State will be at liberty to decline to come into the scheme. I trust, too, that the Commission to be appointed under the Bill will be authorized to empower any State to expend its share of this money, to be advanced by the Commonwealth, in structures other than silos. I am quite aware that the measure provides that a State may erect temporary structures. That provision, however, is absolutely worthless, because no Commission would sanction advances to a State for the erection of temporary structures. The structures must be of a permanent character before any State can hope to secure assistance from the wheat pool. Then clause 8 of the Bill provides that the money shall be spent in the erection of silos. It is obvious, therefore, that a State which does not favour the silo system will not be able to participate in this scheme.

I trust that if the Bill gets into Committee the amendments that have been outlined by Senator Rowell will be adopted. If I for a moment believed that this scheme is a practicable one. I should be the very last to offer opposition to it. But any honorable senator, by devoting half-a-dozen hours of his time to an investigation of our wheat stacks, can conclusively prove that where wheat has been protected against the weather, and has not been attacked by mice, it is in as good a condition to-day as it was two years ago. I do not ask for any greater evidence than I can see with my own

eyes. If honorable senators choose to do so, they can soon convince themselves that wheat can be preserved just as effectually under an iron roof as it can be in a silo, and that Australia is, therefore, not justified in sanctioning the expenditure of £2,850,000 upon the erection of silos for this purpose. I hold in my hand a letter from the representatives of all the farming districts of South Australia, stating that some amendments should be made in the Bill in the direction I have indicated. That communication states—

The money apportioned to South Australia should be spent in the erection of further rain-proof sheds, which can be made mice proof when required, and which experience has shown meets the requirements of this State.

That letter is signed by Laurence O'Loughlin, H. D. Young, John E. Pick, Peter Allen, Wm. Angus, David James, and W. Miller, and, to my mind, it ought to speak most eloquently to honorable senators. Its signatories are all men who have made a life study of the wheat business, and they recognise that grain can be preserved in a rain-proof shed quite as effectually as it can be under any other system. I repeat that the ravages caused by mice to our wheat stacks would have been infinitesimal if the roofs over those stacks could have been kept intact, and the stacks themselves had been protected from the weather. It was the fact of the roofs having to be removed, thus permitting weather influences to operate, which was responsible for the major portion of the damage that has been done.

I believe that the Honorary Minister, on reflection, will recognise that if the course which I have outlined had been followed, 75 per cent. of the damage sustained by our wheat stacks this year would have been obviated. That being so, I fail to see how he can ask Parliament to sanction the expenditure of such a large sum upon the erection of silos to provide storage accommodation for only a small portion of our wheat crop. I say, unhesitatingly, that if weevil attack grain in a silo, and that grain is going to be aerated, the sooner it is taken out of the silo the better, because the moment that wheat is revolved the weevil will be distributed throughout the whole of it. At the present time, however, if weevil attack our wheat stacks, the affected grain can be isolated, and the sound grain treated



independently. That fact is indisputable. In the circumstances, I hope that Ministers will pause before asking the Senate to pass this Bill. I shall certainly oppose it.

Senator PLAIN (Victoria) [11.42].—I have listened attentively to the remarks of Senator Shannon, and I cannot agree with the views which he has expressed. I realize that, to some extent, South Australia cannot very well come into line with the other States upon the question of the bulk handling of wheat. But, judging from the honorable senator's remarks, and from the speeches which have been made elsewhere, South Australia is not by any means free of dangers that are ahead. Speaking in the other branch of the Legislature, Mr. Poynton referred to various stacks in South Australia, notably to one at Glencairn South, where he affirmed that stacks had been built from 20 to 25 feet high.

The PRESIDENT.—I would remind the honorable senator that he is not in order in referring to the speeches delivered in another Chamber.

Senator PLAIN.—I am glad, sir, that you have called my attention to the fact. I recognise that we cannot possibly couple this scheme with the question of the bulk handling of wheat, and I sympathize with the Honorary Minister in the embarrassing position that he occupied in introducing this Bill. But I think that every honorable senator will admit that the scheme which is embodied in the measure, represents the first instalment of the system of the bulk handling of wheat. So far, Victoria is the only State that has gone into this matter in a systematic manner—

Senator DE LARGIE.—And New South Wales.

Senator PLAIN.—If this Bill passes, the silos for which it provides will be erected at the earliest possible moment. The principal argument adduced by Senator Shannon this morning was to the effect that these silos will be valueless if weevil attack the wheat, because it will be impossible to treat the infected grain separately. I wish to inform him that the only effective way in which weeviled wheat can be treated is by the construction of silos.

Senator SHANNON.—Does the honorable senator say that weevil cannot get into wheat in a silo?

Senator PLAIN.—They can get into wheat stored in a silo, and they can prosper there. But there is a very effective method of killing weevil in any wheat that has been placed in a silo.

In passing, I may remark that the silo system is in extensive operation in America. There, they have what are known as "hospital" silos—that is to say, silos of a particular type, which have been erected for the express purpose of dealing with weeviled wheat. The silos are filled, the carbonic acid gas is put in, and then they are sealed. For the cost of 4d. per ton every grain of wheat in the silos is saved from the attacks of weevils.

Senator SHANNON.—Is it deteriorated for human consumption?

Senator PLAIN.—Not at all, and the gas is not lost. It is very heavy, and penetrates from the top right to the bottom of the silo. It is then recaptured and used for the next silo. The present position, in South Australia in particular, is that the stacks that are open to the elements are already affected by moisture. It is true, as Senator Shannon says, that there are not many weevils in them yet, or not many signs of weevil, but directly the warm weather comes in, not only will those stacks in South Australia be attacked, but the 4,000,000 bags that have such a handsome appearance at Geelong may be seriously affected also by the pest. The Geelong stacks consist of bags that have been sent from various parts of the State, but the wheat has been re-bagged and re-stacked to a great extent. Let there be no mistake about it, when the warm weather comes the weevils are going to make their appearance, and unless we take means beforehand to cope with those destructive vermin we shall lose millions of pounds' worth of wheat.

Senator SHANNON.—More than by mice?

Senator PLAIN.—Far more. That is the reason why we should be up and doing, and be prepared for the attack when it comes.

We are also informed that we may have to retain and store a certain amount of grain for the British Government in years to come, and I take it that it is our duty to look after that wheat to the best possible advantage for the people who have paid us for it. The States will be paid for the extra handling.



Senator SENIOR.—But the projected silos will accommodate only one-third of the normal crop.

Senator PLAIN.—Yes, in Victoria they will accommodate only about 20,000,000 bushels, but if it becomes necessary at any time to use them as hospital silos we can treat an enormous amount of old wheat in them. It will not be necessary to treat the new wheat if it is properly safeguarded.

Senator SHANNON.—Will this treatment by gas render the wheat immune from future attacks by weevils?

Senator PLAIN.—It will if the wheat is not again exposed to the elements. Of course, if it is going to be thrown out in the open again the weevil will attack it once more. The process does not make it immune in the way the honorable senator suggests, but it can be saved.

Senator SENIOR.—We should have to have silos large enough to take the whole of the wheat.

Senator PLAIN.—That is not necessary. It can be passed through the existing silos at the rate of 10,000, 20,000 or 50,000 bushels at a time wherever the weevils have attacked it. Unless some precaution is taken in South Australia the weevil may soon attack the bags that are exposed over there, and what position will the people of South Australia be placed in then if they have no silos? The wheat cannot be treated in stacks to prevent the increase of weevil.

Senator SHANNON.—You are putting quite a new phase of the matter, one that the Minister did not tell us of at all.

Senator PLAIN.—These are the questions that we have to debate. It is essential to take every precaution possible to protect not only the 6,000,000 tons that are likely to be in hand by February next, but even the following year's crop, which we may also have on our hands, because if we fail to protect our only asset at this time, we not only pull down the whole of our industrial structure, but cripple for years to come our productive progress.

Senator Colonel ROWELL.—The silos will take only a small proportion.

Senator PLAIN.—But there is no limit to the quantity which could be treated. The silos can be filled and emptied again and again as often as you like.

Senator Colonel ROWELL.—Would you put it back into stacks again after treatment?

Senator PLAIN.—That can be done, but it must be taken care of. There is no danger if it is properly treated, and put under a roof where moisture will not reach it.

Senator PRATTEN.—Is not the genesis of this Bill the report made by a special Wheat Commission recently?

Senator PLAIN.—I am not aware of it.

Senator PRATTEN.—Were not the conclusions of that Commission agreed to by the South Australian representatives?

Senator Colonel ROWELL.—Yes, but those representatives were not farmers.

Senator PLAIN.—The greatest opposition to the bulk handling system has come from farmers who profess to know all about it; but I notice that the very men who were so much opposed to the system some years ago are most in favour of it now. In Victoria the farmers as a whole are now sympathetic towards bulk handling, because they see that it is not possible to produce wheat satisfactorily, and to an advantage, if the present system is continued. The only improved method that commends itself to them, so far as safety is concerned, is the bulk handling system. The Minister, no doubt, had in his mind when he moved the second reading of the Bill, the idea that something must be done, but he did not indicate whether he intended to treat the wheat in the way I have indicated, and it seemed to me that the reason why he did not express his views to the Senate on that question was the fear that he might create some panic and anxiety in the minds of producers that all was not well with their wheat. If we can point out some way by which we can save their wheat during the years to come, and safeguard their interests, it is our duty to do so. Honorable senators can point to no other method by which that can be done. It may be suggested that we can build sheds and put the wheat in them, but that will not save it should the weevil attack it. If it does, they will find that they have in those sheds in a year's time nothing but husks.

Senator DE LARGIE.—And the sheds would be just as expensive as the other method.

Senator PLAIN.—Quite so. I am satisfied that Victoria, when she takes the matter in hand, and the Bill goes through this Parliament to give her power to do so, will go straight ahead



with the introduction of the system of handling and storing wheat in bulk.

I realize that the operations of the scheme are very complicated. The Commonwealth Government must have some control over the State authorities. We are advancing them the necessary money to carry out the scheme, and asking them to put the silos in the places where we think the States will be most benefited by them. We are likely to retain some control or supervision over them, and a certain amount of conflict may arise on that point between the two bodies. The Commonwealth supervisor may not be satisfied with the particular system adopted, or may express the opinion that the silo is not being put in a proper place. The States may tell him to mind his own business, as they are putting the silos in the positions which in their opinion will be most beneficial to the country, and to their own system of handling. However, I think any such friction can be easily got over.

I trust the Senate will remember its responsibility in this matter to see that the very best methods to prevent any great destruction of our wheat crops are adopted. If honorable senators can point out any other system that is likely to prove more beneficial to the producers, I am with them, and will even go so far as to throw away my ideas so far as the prospect of the first instalment of wheat handling is concerned. I will support any scheme that they can prove to the Senate will meet the requirements. No honorable senator has done so up to the present time, but I shall be only too pleased to support any practical scheme that they bring forward that is superior to the one I have outlined.

Senator DE LARGIE (Western Australia) [11.57].—Whilst the Senate will always pay attention to men in the wheat trade, and try to gather from them the prevailing opinions of those interested in the business, I cannot altogether agree with Senator Shannon's forecast of the future results of the wheat pool. If I thought the pool was to become a thing of the past, and the Government was to have no hand in the wheat trade of Australia in the future, I question very much whether we should be justified in making the preparations that we propose to make with the £3,000,000 mentioned in the Bill.

My own opinion is that we are just at the beginning of the organization of our wheat trade, and I have come to that conclusion after having visited Canada last year, and seen the enormous organization of the wheat trade of that country. Until Senator Shannon, Senator Plain, and other Australian wheat-growers or traders go to those countries where the bulk handling system is in vogue, they can have very little idea of the want of organization in Australia. Our isolation is making us quite parochial and narrow-minded in our views. That is always one of the evils of an isolated country. Canada is quite close to the United States of America, and practically for trade purposes one nation with them. The United States of America and Canadian experiences are working side by side, so that everything that is possible and new in the trade is there seen in operation. Australia is the only big wheat-producing country in the world where the bagging system prevails. We are still where we began a hundred years ago. We have not advanced one step beyond the methods of our grandfathers.

Senator SENIOR.—Canada has not to carry her wheat as far as South Australia has.

Senator DE LARGIE.—I saw wheat carried 1,000 miles in Canada.

Senator SENIOR.—Look at our distance from our market—England.

Senator DE LARGIE.—The very fact that we are further away from our market should be an inducement to us to adopt the most economical way of handling wheat. All the members of the Parliamentary party, which visited Canada last year, had ample opportunities for getting information, and I think the testimony given by Sir Robert Borden, the Prime Minister of Canada, accurately represents the opinion of all the other men interested in the wheat trade. In the present measure it is proposed to provide silos for 50,000,000 bushels, and to build elevators with a capacity of only from 25,000 to 50,000 bushels; and perhaps, as our trade is so much smaller than that of Canada, these will be large enough. It is quite possible that under normal conditions this will be sufficient for a number of years to come, because I noticed that Montreal, which is claimed to be the largest wheat port in the world, had only three big elevators—one controlled by the Harbor Commission, and the other two



by the Grand Trunk Railway—and that these elevators had a total capacity of 8,000,000 bushels. I do not know if it is wise to build elevators with a small bushel capacity; but, if so, it seems strange that in Canada, where the wheat merchants ought to know their business, the smallest elevator I saw was at Quebec, and it had a capacity of 1,000,000 bushels. In my opinion, as far as the principle of bulk-handling is concerned, we may be quite safe in adopting the Government proposal, because we will simply be following the precedent of all the other great wheat-producing countries of the world. During my visit to Montreal, Quebec, Toronto, Calgary, and Winnipeg, I was assured that the cost of handling wheat in bulk at the port of shipment was only 1 cent per bushel. I am not in a position to say what the cost is in Australia under the bagging system, but I am quite sure that it must be much more expensive than the Canadian method, and, moreover, the work is arduous and the men engaged in it are properly entitled to good wages. In Canada, all the latest methods for handling the wheat have been adopted. The grain is taken from the harvester in the field, put into a box wagon and carried to the railway station, and by simply pulling a bolt it is dumped into bins. Upon arrival at the port of shipment, pneumatic pumps are attached to the railway waggons, and the grain is pumped straight into the vessel's hold at the rate of from 10,000 to 12,000 bushels per hour, so that a vessel may be fully loaded in a very short time.

Senator Colonel ROWELL.—But the grain has to be bagged twice, once upon the farm, and again to the mill.

Senator DE LARGIE.—It was not bagged during any of the operations I have described, anyhow, though I am unable to say if it has to be bagged on arrival in England.

During my visit to Canada I showed to a number of gentlemen a photograph which I had of a great wheat stack at Fremantle, and invariably they came to the conclusion that it was a photograph of sand-bags ready to be sent away to the war. They had no idea that our wheat was handled in this way. In the face of the experience of every big wheat-producing country in the world, we shall be quite justified in adopting the silo or elevator system for the handling of our grain.

The mice plague and the weevil pest have combined to force this matter under our attention lately, and I might inform the Senate that only the other day the New South Wales farmers in conference carried a resolution approving of the bulk handling system as well as of the Wheat Pool. I cannot conceive that any body of men, who in the past have been robbed of a great deal of the fruits of their labour by the competitive system, should ever revert to the old method for the disposal of their produce. For the first time in the history of Australia the marketing of our wheat has been placed upon a sensible basis, under which the producers are assured of a fair return, and I cannot imagine that they will readily go back to the old system. In view of the probable developments of the wheat trade, these silos will be required for the safe storage of wheat so that it may be marketed at the most opportune time; and the fact that there has been so much destruction by mice of late is sufficient to warrant the construction of silos. If, however, I thought that the farming community would revert to the old competitive method for the disposal of their produce, and allow themselves to be used by those who are able to corner the wheat market for their own advantage, and to the disadvantage of the farmers, I do not know that I would support the measure now before the Senate. This is a most important industry, and it is essential we should follow the example set us by the United States of America, Canada, Russia, and all the other big wheat-producing countries of the world. Wheat-growing and wool production are together bringing millions of pounds into Australia, and it is important, therefore, we should give these industries our very best attention, because for many years after the war our wheat will be very much required by Great Britain, France, Italy, and other allied belligerent Powers. According to the best authorities in the wheat trade, there will be a splendid market for many years to come.

I hope that this measure is intended merely as the first instalment of the bulk-handling system, and that before long we will install the necessary machinery at all our principal wheat centres for the handling of our wheat in the cheapest manner. If this is done, we shall be able to release a large number of workmen from what is at present an arduous occupation, and to



find more congenial employment for them in other directions. We all remember the outcry made some years ago against the big wheat sack, and I think Mr. Chapman is justly entitled to all the credit he received for the introduction of the 200-lb. bag; but I would say, let us do away altogether with the bagging system, and, for the future, handle our grain by machinery.

Senator Colonel ROWELL (South Australia) [12.14].—I can understand the anxiety of the Government with regard to the protection of wheat at present stored in Australia, and I take it that the erection of silos is regarded as the first step in the introduction of the bulk handling system; but, so far as my own State is concerned, this system is objected to, I believe, by 90 per cent. of the people interested in the wheat trade. I do not think we have had sufficient information to demonstrate that bulk handling can be successfully employed for long-distance carrying. The weevil pest is the principal difficulty. The mice plague, from which we are now suffering, recurs only at intervals; but the weevil trouble is always present to a greater or less degree, and I do not think it has ever been proved that we can carry wheat in bulk from Australia to the Old Country without the cargoes being seriously affected by weevil. I remember, once, when weevil appeared in a cargo of wheat shipped to England, one of the leading merchants who made inquiries as to the cause assured me that it was due to the fact that the grain had been shipped in a somewhat green condition.

I have no objection to bulk handling and the erection of silos in those States which may wish to introduce the system; and if the Minister will give me an assurance that he is prepared to accept two slight amendments which I have indicated, I shall not have much more to say on the subject. So far as South Australia is concerned, the people interested in the wheat trade will not agree to bulk handling for some years to come. I would like to know whether the Honorary Minister is prepared to accept the few slight amendments I have indicated. It would mean in our State that we could erect sheds with the money so advanced to protect the whole of our wheat. However, it seems that the Government are determined to go on with their own scheme,

and I am not prepared to offer further opposition to the Bill.

Senator RUSSELL (Victoria—Honorary Minister) [12.16].—The question of temporary or permanent storage has arisen. I wish to make it quite clear that the silos proposed to be erected can readily be adapted to the bulk handling system, which I believe the majority, if not all, of the States will adopt subsequently. Therefore, it will be an advantage to use the silo form of storage. I want to point out again that this storage is not necessary because of the mice. I believe that, as the result of our experience, we now have an effective means of dealing with mice. This wheat has been stored for nearly two years, and, unfortunately, we are not optimistic enough to believe that we are going to get it taken away. It is to prevent the old wheat from becoming weevily and consequently deteriorating in value to a considerable extent that we are so anxious to provide silos. In my opinion, quite a considerable amount of additional temporary storage will have to be found before we can get our wheat taken away. But that is no reason why we should waste money by erecting temporary storage. Suppose that the war were to conclude at the end of two or three years, what would be the value of the assets? We would not get a twentieth part of their value then. Our desire is to lessen the cost, and we believe that the silos will return to us their full value. Suppose that the war should continue for five years, I have no hesitation in saying that the silos, under proper care, will not have depreciated by  $\frac{1}{2}$  per cent. Therefore, we shall have the full asset for another purpose.

Senator SHANNON.—What would the silos be used for, if not for wheat?

Senator RUSSELL.—The silos will be used for wheat. The facts as to the condition of our wheat are well known in the Old Country, and that has been very helpful to us in disposing of our products. If a report goes to the Old Country that the wheat we have here at the present time is depreciating, what hope shall we have of selling next year's crop? To-day we have only one customer for our wheat. The British Government must buy our wheat for the Allies, otherwise we cannot sell it. If the news is conveyed to the British Government that the wheat we have already sold them is rapidly deteriorating, and that some of it will be of



no value to them, what a cheek we would have to ask them to buy our wheat in the future under such conditions! Therefore, I appeal to honorable senators to take a large view of the question, and come into line with the rest of Australia in order to preserve the wheat we have sold to the Old Country.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Bill read a second time.

*In Committee:*

Clauses 1 to 6 agreed to.

Clause 7—

Subject to this Act, the Commission may—

(d) arrange with the Governments of the respective States for the erection of such other temporary structures as may be found necessary.

Senator Colonel ROWELL (South Australia) [12.21].—I move—

That the word "temporary" be left out of paragraph d.

The omission of this word will afford to those States which do not desire to have silos an opportunity of building structures for the storage of wheat.

Senator RUSSELL (Victoria—Honorary Minister) [12.22].—I think that the representatives of South Australia ought to have a little co-operative meeting to see what it wants. This paragraph was put in the clause at the suggestion of a South Australian and with the approval of the Prime Minister. We made this concession to South Australians, who evidently desired to do something in that direction.

Senator NEEDHAM.—What about the Western Australians?

Senator RUSSELL.—I am pointing out that what South Australians in another House fought for and won, South Australians in the Senate are attempting to destroy. It is a very sound proposal. In my opinion, as I said yesterday, one-third storage is not going to be sufficient for the protection of our wheat, and other additional storage, which may be of a lighter character, will, in selected places, have to be adopted on account of the difficulty of transporting the wheat. This paragraph simply enables the Commission to arrange with the Governments of the respective States for the erection of such other temporary structures as may be found necessary. We estimate that at the end of January or February next there will be nearly 6,000,000 tons of

wheat in the hands of the pool. We perceive the position in regard to shipping. If it is apparent that the shipping difficulty will continue, and that we cannot transport wheat, this provision will enable us to call a conference of the States, and perhaps to arrange to spend another million on the erection of temporary storage, which subsequently would be of no use for wheat. If such temporary storage were used for three or four years, it would become a second, or third, or fourth class asset. The State would receive little or no money for the material. That is really the difference between silos and temporary structures. The charge for a silo can be extended over a period of fifty years.

Senator PRATTEN.—What is the charge likely to be?

Senator RUSSELL.—I believe that the charge to the farmer will be practically nothing for the first few years. The storage in the silos, which will be of permanent construction, will probably be charged over the whole crop, and not merely over a third, because each farmer's lot cannot be separated. I want to charge collectively the Australian pool with as much per bushel on all their wheat as will cover the interest and whatever depreciation may be decided upon as sound. Honorable senators know what the depreciation in value of the silos is likely to be. It practically means that we shall have little more to pay than the interest on the total cost. I have no hesitation in saying that it will be the lightest storage charge ever made in any part of the world.

Senator NEEDHAM.—What will the construction be?

Senator RUSSELL.—The construction will be steel and concrete. There is not going to be any competition between the States. Both materials will be standardised as to quantity and quality and, I believe, as to price.

Senator PRATTEN.—Do you draw a distinction between depreciation and amortization?

Senator RUSSELL.—Both matters will be taken into consideration. It must be remembered that this is not going to be a permanent debt, but a debt to be met out of the earnings. This storage is to be provided with the object of preserving the products of the country. The only gain which the Government desire



to get is a knowledge that they are helping the country and the producers. We are merely acting as a co-operative company.

Senator PRATTEN.—The success of co-operative companies usually depends upon the management.

Senator RUSSELL.—This Bill will not create the management. In all probability the ultimate management will be taken over by the Wheat Board. Subsequently it is intended, should the pool system die out, that each State should assume charge of its own wheat, and take over the responsibility for the debt. This scheme is intended to cover the war period. I believe it is essential to the success of the pool.

Senator PRATTEN.—When do you estimate the silos will be built?

Senator RUSSELL.—I do not know, but realizing that it is emergency work, the Commission, in combination with the States, will make the best efforts to erect the silos as rapidly as possible.

Senator NEEDHAM.—You have the men available to build them?

Senator RUSSELL.—I am confident that there is not going to be a shortage of material, but I do not feel so confident as to the amount of labour available.

Senator NEEDHAM.—The labour is available.

Senator RUSSELL.—It will be a happy combination then. I ask honorable senators not to accept the amendment, as it would involve practically a reorganization of the whole system.

Senator Colonel ROWELL (South Australia) [12.30].—I understand the Minister to say that if the clause is left as it stands the Government will be prepared to advance money to the States for the erection of temporary structures.

Senator RUSSELL.—If the Commission recommends it the Government will certainly take it into consideration.

Senator Colonel ROWELL.—It is my intention when we come to the next clause to propose the insertion after the word "silos" of the words "or other structures," so that the Commission may be in a position to grant money for the erection of storage other than silos. The Bill provides that money may be advanced for the erection of silos, but there is nothing to show that it may be advanced for the erection of other structures.

Senator RUSSELL.—The Commission will have no power to grant any money. It will have power only to recommend to the Government that money be granted.

Amendment negatived.

Clause agreed to.

Clause 8—

For the purpose of facilitating the construction and erection of silos in pursuance of this Act, the Commonwealth may, from time to time, advance to the States a sum not exceeding, in the whole, the sum of £2,350,000.

Senator Colonel ROWELL (South Australia) [12.33].—I move—

That after the word "silos" the words "or other structures" be inserted.

This clause does not give the Government power to advance money for the temporary structures that have been referred to, or for any purpose other than the erection of silos. I desire that the Government should have that power.

Senator RUSSELL (Victoria—Honorary Minister) [12.34].—The honorable senator desires to give the Government power to advance money to the States for the purpose of erecting temporary storage for wheat, but that is already provided for by paragraph *d* of clause 7, and the adoption of the amendment now submitted by the honorable senator would do nothing further to accomplish his object. I remind him that should his amendment be carried, it will have the effect of altering what is practically a contract between the Commonwealth and the States, and will make it necessary to return the measure to the House of Representatives. The matter is urgent, and we desire to go on with the work. I would like to say further that no power to advance money which may be given to the Government under this Bill will compel them to advance a single penny for any purpose of which they do not approve.

Senator McDOUGALL (New South Wales) [12.36].—Will the Minister in charge of the Bill say whether the design of the proposed silos is such that any particular person, firm, or company, will possess the sole right to the construction of silos of that design in Australia?

Senator RUSSELL (Victoria—Honorary Minister) [12.37].—No. One condition laid down is that no silo or machinery in connexion therewith can be adopted unless it is approved by the Commission. The object of this is to prevent any contract being drawn up in such a way as to



give a preference to any one holding patent rights. I happen to have before me an advertisement published by the Victorian Government calling for tenders for the erection of silos, and this is one of the conditions laid down—

No plans or specifications will be accepted which restrict the design of any machinery or equipment of its manufacture, supply, or erection to any particular manufacturing company, or which will entail the use of any patented form or method of grain silo construction.

Senator McDougall.—That is what I wanted to get at. If any firm possesses patent rights to a design, which it would be best in the interests of the country to adopt, and which would save money, the adoption of that design should not be prevented.

Senator Russell.—I should like to make the matter quite clear. Under the tender system, all firms, including those who have patent rights, will be able to tender. But in calling for tenders, we do not say that the silos must be constructed in accordance with a particular patent. To do so would make it certain that the work must be given to the holders of that patent. All persons are asked to submit tenders, and those possessing patents will have the same opportunity as others.

Senator McDougall.—The best design will not be debarred because it is patented.

Senator Russell.—No; the endeavour will be to discover the best design. Amendment negatived.

Clause agreed to.

Clauses 9 and 10 and title agreed to.

Bill reported without amendment; report adopted.

Standing Orders suspended, and Bill read a third time.

## AUSTRALIAN SOLDIERS' REPATRIATION BILL

*In Committee:* (Consideration resumed from 26th July, *vide* page 502).

Clause 6—

There shall be a Repatriation Commission, to consist of seven members.

Upon which Senator Needham had moved—

That the word "seven" be left out, with a view to insert in lieu thereof the word "three."

Senator Colonel Rowell (South Australia) [12.40].—In my opinion,

the system proposed by the Government for carrying out the repatriation scheme is the right one. I have listened with attention to the debate upon this clause, and it has appeared to me that some honorable senators seem to forget that the practical working out of the scheme will be largely in the hands of the State Boards. The amendment proposes the reduction of the number of members of the Repatriation Commission from seven to three. I think it is better that there should be a Commission of seven members, and that there should be a representative of each State on the Commission. It may be somewhat expensive to bring representatives from the different States to carry out the work of the Commission, but it will be a council of advice to the Government, and I think that it would be better that each State should be represented upon it. The able-bodied amongst our returned soldiers will not require charity. What they will probably look for is to be replaced in the occupations which they followed before they went to the war. I agree that everything possible should be done for those who are wounded or mentally afflicted. In my view, a very small percentage of the men will be willing to go upon the land if they have not been on the land before. As a producer, and one who has worked on the land all his life, I think the best means to be adopted to settle returned soldiers on the land would be to place them on small dairy farms from which they might derive some return almost as soon as they started work. I intend to support the clause as it stands.

Senator Thomas (New South Wales) [12.45].—During the early part of this discussion I intimated that I favoured the creation of a central Commission consisting of three paid men, rather than a Commission of seven, who would act in an honorary capacity. When I made that statement, I had not heard the declaration of the Vice-President of the Executive Council on this question. Having listened attentively to what he said, I am now convinced that the functions of the central Commission will be very different from what I had anticipated. I was under the impression that that body would be responsible for giving effect to the repatriation scheme. The Vice-President of the Executive Council, however, has explained that it will merely be an



advisory body called in to assist him in administering the scheme whenever he may require such assistance. In view of his statement, I am no longer prepared to support the creation of a central Commission of three members, nor can I favour the appointment of paid members. In view of all the circumstances, I do not think that seven commissioners would be too many to appoint, and I am inclined to think that they should act in an honorary capacity. I am also satisfied, after mature reflection, that the Minister will be able to secure, in an honorary capacity, the services of persons whose services would not be available if they were to receive payment for them. I take it that the Commission will hold its meetings in Melbourne. That being so, I should be glad to see one of the leading business men of Australia appointed to it. Obviously he will require to be a man either from Sydney or Melbourne.

Senator HENDERSON.—Why?

Senator THOMAS.—Because the Minister would not have the same chance of getting the type of man whom I have in my mind from the more distant States. I would like to see appointed to this body not an accountant, or an ordinary business man, but a gentleman who is associated with one of the largest industries in the community. The services of such a man could not be permanently secured for any payment. It is extremely unlikely that that type of man would be prepared to leave either Brisbane or Perth to serve on this Commission in a paid capacity.

Senator DE LARGIE.—Why cast any reflection on the small States?

Senator THOMAS.—I have no intention of reflecting upon them. I merely say that the type of man I have in my mind can be most readily secured either from New South Wales or Victoria. The proposal of the Government will afford the Vice-President of the Executive Council an opportunity of securing on this Commission the services of one of the ablest business men in Australia. A great deal has been said to the effect that there is too much red-tape about our Government Departments, and that they are not conducted on business lines. The Government proposal will enable the Minister who is in charge of repatriation

matters to secure the services of one of the ablest business men in Australia in an honorary capacity. Senator Foll certainly delivered a very admirable speech on this question, and one which, I am sure, was of great assistance to honorable senators. However, I chiefly rose to put before the Committee the reasons which have influenced me to reverse the vote that I had intended to cast upon this matter.

Senator NEEDHAM (Western Australia) [12.52].—When progress was reported yesterday, I was referring to a suggestion made by Senator Fairbairn that only the services of gentlemen acting in an honorary capacity, and influenced by patriotic motives should be accepted on the central Commission which it is proposed to appoint. Under this Bill we are asked to determine the procedure to be adopted for the repatriation of our soldiers, of whom I hope at least 300,000 will return. Now it is proposed to appoint a Commission to assist in the administration of this scheme, and the necessity for appointing only business men to that body has been strongly stressed by Senator Thomas. He has affirmed that we should secure only the services of men who have made a success of their businesses, and who have established a great industry. By virtue of that circumstance, he claims that only such gentlemen are qualified to act on the Commission. I do not know how many businesses Senator Thomas has built up in Australia. I am not aware that he is at the head of any great business, but I do know that he is a member of this Parliament, and, in that capacity, is assisting to determine the destinies of Australia. He was elected, not because he has been a successful business man, but because he is possessed of a fund of common sense. Now, if men can be returned to the National Parliament who have not proved great successes as business men, surely it ought not to be impossible to find gentlemen who will be willing to assist the Minister in charge of this Bill to give effect to this repatriation scheme, who have not been successful business men.

Senator PRATTEN.—Would the honorable senator bar business men?



Senator NEEDHAM.—No. I am merely replying to a chorus of statements by honorable senators opposite since I submitted my amendment. They have pinned their faith to the appointment of only business men to this Commission. Whilst I would welcome the presence of such men there, I am not prepared to admit that they are the only persons qualified to act upon that body. We must not confine our search for men to assist the Government in restoring our returned soldiers to civilian life, to that particular section of the community. Yesterday the Vice-President of the Executive Council stated that several business men had offered their services on the Commission. I understood him to say that he had been offered the services of the head of the greatest Labour organization in Australia.

Senator MILLEN.—Does the honorable senator object to a representative of organized Labour being appointed to this body?

Senator NEEDHAM.—I am not objecting at all. I merely desire to divert the Vice-President of the Executive Council from the conversation which he was enjoying with Senator Thomas.

Senator MILLEN.—It was much more interesting than is the honorable senator's matter.

Senator NEEDHAM.—Then this Bill can be of no importance whatever, notwithstanding the statements made by the Vice-President of the Executive Council when moving its second reading. I imagine that any gentleman who is the head of a Labour organization will have quite enough to do if he focusses his attention upon the affairs of that organization. Similarly, a successful business man will be sufficiently occupied in looking after the business which he has built up. It is not likely that he would allow the time that he devoted to this Commission to interfere with the success of his business, and to allow it to fall into decay.

Senator FOLL.—Others have done that already. I can quote two instances.

Senator NEEDHAM.—I dare say that the honorable senator is able to quote many instances; but, at the same time, the banking balances of those individuals

have increased along with their patriotic fervour.

Senator DE LARGIE.—What industries have made money out of the war?

Senator NEEDHAM.—If I were to reply to that inquiry, I should be promptly called to order; but when the War-time Profits Taxation Bill comes before the Senate, I shall be happy to supply Senator de Largie with the information.

*Sitting suspended from 1 to 2.30 p.m.*

Senator NEEDHAM.—I hope the Committee will disabuse its mind of the idea that the Commission can do successful work only if composed of men who have been successful in business. Whether the Commission consists of seven or three, I will welcome on it the best brains that can be obtained in Australia; but there are in Australia men who have not been successful in building up big businesses, but are yet capable of carrying out this work. The Minister laid emphasis on the necessity of making the commissioners honorary; but for some time past there has been a Repatriation Committee, one of whose members has been acting in an honorary capacity to the extent of two guineas per day. That is more than £12 per week.

Senator MILLEN.—Do you mean every day?

Senator NEEDHAM.—I understand that it pans out, or did pan out, at two guineas every day.

Senator MILLEN.—On the Repatriation Committee? I should be very much obliged if you would give me the name privately.

Senator NEEDHAM.—I do not want to mention the name.

Senator MILLEN.—I think you are hopelessly wrong.

Senator NEEDHAM.—Will the Minister deny that that gentleman has been paid two guineas per day?

Senator MILLEN.—I cannot deny that; but I can say that no gentleman down there has been getting two guineas every day.

Senator NEEDHAM.—I accept the Minister's statement, but the matter may be one for further inquiry.

Senator MILLEN.—It will be.

Senator NEEDHAM.—I am not making a definite assertion. I only say that I



understand that such has been the custom.

Senator MILLEN.—The members of that committee are allowed expenses, but that is only when they come from another State.

Senator NEEDHAM. — To what amount?

Senator MILLEN.—I cannot say what their expenses are.

Senator NEEDHAM.—But the point is that they are allowed expenses. If a Commission of seven is appointed, and the suggestion of honorable senators is adopted that there should be a man from each State, they will get expenses, and a very big expense indeed will be incurred under the cloak of "honorary services"—I had almost said honorariums. Let us be honest and say that so many men—seven, five, or three—shall be appointed; but that they shall be paid. I think they should be paid well. The work is too important to allow men to divide their time between it and their private occupations. They should centre their minds on it. The Minister said they would be engaged only in an advisory capacity, but the Bill is not definite in that regard. If that is the intention of the Government, they should state it in the Bill in black and white.

We were told in the Governor-General's Speech that it was the intention of the Government to appoint a Minister for Repatriation, which means creating another portfolio. That is not necessary. Senator Millen has so far conducted the work well, and I should be glad to see him remain at the head of it. I know of no man who can conduct it better than he has done, but I see no necessity for creating another portfolio.

Senator MILLEN.—That is rather curious. You are deadly opposed to all honorary members on the Commission, but you want a Minister to work for nothing.

Senator NEEDHAM.—The honorable senator knows perfectly well that he is not working for nothing. He is too wide awake for that. He can also bring to his assistance, as a staff, officers from other branches of the Commonwealth Service. I think a few can be spared from different Departments. The Commission itself should be permanent, should be paid, and should not consist of so many as seven. We shall get more benefit from

a Commission of that nature than from a casual one, as is suggested in the Bill. It is imperative that a returned soldier should be on the Commission.

Senator SENIOR.—We do not object to that.

Senator NEEDHAM.—I hope the honorable senator does not, but some honorable senators suggested that there was no necessity for it. Each State Board should also have a returned soldier on it. I submit the amendment in the sincere desire to assist the Minister to improve the Bill.

Senator REID (Queensland) [2.40].—I have not heard one sound argument why the Commissioners should be paid. It is very inadvisable to increase the number of paid officials, for I have a horror of the paid bureaucracies that are springing up in the Commonwealth. One of the most serious dangers of a democratic community like this is that it cannot have its affairs run without men being paid. I am astonished at the source from which the amendment has emanated. We can find the very best examples of voluntarism and self-sacrificing work in the very movement that Senator Needham at present represents. It was built up by those who gave their time and money, and many of them their lives, for the Labour cause when it was on a voluntary basis; and the curse of it, and this has brought it to its present position, is the number of paid bureaucracies that are running it in every State. The same applies to other institutions. We should limit the choice of the Minister to a very great extent if we agreed to the appointment of paid officials. There are at present quite a large number of excellent men in every State well fitted to fill positions on the Commission, and also on the State Boards. Quite a number of them will be willing and pleased to give all their abilities to the work of looking after the affairs of returned soldiers, and I think they would do it in a much more humane and better spirit than would paid officials. From my own experience in many movements of a voluntary nature, I have found that where you have a good committee you will always get the best work done. I am anxious to see this great work of repatriation well carried out. At present, there is a great deal of empty sentiment and a great deal of fatherly talk about returned soldiers that is quite unnecessary. There is a



great deal of gallery business at the present time, both in regard to returned soldiers and to the general public; and I am most anxious to see this important subject put on a permanent business basis. By that I do not mean a cold, commercial cent. per cent. basis, because I want to see it carried out with all the humane feeling that a man would naturally have towards returned soldiers.

Senator NEEDHAM.—Would you object to a returned soldier being on the Commission?

Senator REID.—Certainly not. The Minister has already expressed his willingness to include two returned soldiers. That is a very fair proportion on a commission of seven. Those two will be quite able to represent the feelings of the returned men, and the other five will be able to look after the affairs of the public, who, after all, are the main persons concerned. All the work that has been done voluntarily during the war has shown that this work can be done well on the same basis. I know that in many instances voluntarism has been more or less a failure; but in a case of this kind, with a definite work and a definite object, and with a limited number of men to deal with, there is no reason why it should not be a complete success. Throughout the Commonwealth it will be found that the institutions which have been best looked after are those which have a voluntary council or committee. The sooner we recognise that our country demands the best we can give it, whether we are paid for our services or not, the better it will be for the nation. If the Government stand firm in this matter, I am sure the clause will be carried as it stands by both Houses, and the Commission and State Boards will be constituted of business men with financial and organizing ability, who are only too willing to give their services voluntarily for the benefit of those who have gone forth from this country and sacrificed their all in its defence. I have seen so often the dangers involved in the appointment of paid officials that I shall enter my protest every time against any proposal to increase their numbers.

Senator NEEDHAM.—Will you carry that right along in all the Departments?

Senator REID.—I shall carry it along wherever common sense tells me it is the right thing to do. You cannot lay down any hard-and-fast rule to apply everywhere, but we should try to get the volun-

tary services of the best men in the community to serve the State wherever possible. If we do that it will be for the welfare, not only of the returned soldiers, but of the Commonwealth.

Senator FAIRBAIRN.—And civil servants, too. We shall not be able to pay them directly.

Senator REID.—They are getting quite strong enough. The voluntary system in this case will give the Minister a much wider field of choice, because there are dozens of men throughout the Commonwealth eminently suited for this work who would not take it if the positions were paid. They would not neglect their businesses to take the work on. As the Minister said, men of that kind could meet in the afternoons or evenings, and do the work in a business-like way, and do it, too, much more humanely than paid officials would. I have a dread of the paid official system, and would not have it mixed up with the returned soldiers. I quite understand the position that the representatives of the Labour party opposite take up; but I should like to appeal to Senator Needham and those associated with him not to press the paid business too much, and to look where they are at present. I think they will then recognise that the sooner we have the system worked by men who are willing to give their best to the community, the better it will be for the Commonwealth.

Senator McDUGALL (New South Wales) [2.49].—I am sorry I was misunderstood by Senator Foll when I spoke on this subject yesterday afternoon. He represented me as saying that the three members of the Commission should be returned soldiers. I did not say anything of the sort, and I was very glad to find, on getting my *Hansard* proof this morning, that what I did say reached the official reporter at the table. I find that he recorded exactly what I said—that there were returned soldiers, to my knowledge, who were capable of undertaking these positions. I say that now. I had eight long weeks on the water when returning to Australia with a returned Colonel, who was a business man, and would suit Senator Thomas right up to the knocker. He carried on a big business himself, and would be able to take a position of this kind admirably. I have seen others, but I am not putting in a word for any particular person in making these remarks. I understand that



one honorable senator said he would like to see two returned soldiers on the commission, and that the Minister had agreed to this course. That was the first I had heard of it. If returned soldiers are to be appointed, how are we going to get representation of the States? I want to see the Returned Soldiers Association represented, but I would not like that body to have a majority of representatives. I believe in having paid men, and if we can get the best men to pay them well. If it were not for payment of members I would not be here, because I could not afford to travel frequently from my State to the Seat of Government. I do not want to create paid positions, but my experience in the administration of the Commonwealth's affairs is that the best results will be obtained by adopting this course. I represented the trade unions on one of these voluntary committees, so I know a little about the subject. I would rather see paid officials administering the fund, and believe it would be done better by them than by voluntary commissioners.

I do not want to say any more, except that I understood the figures I gave yesterday, as to the cost of distribution of patriotic funds, were correct, although I made a mistake when I spoke about a deputation, as the gathering was a conference, held in Melbourne. I read the report in a Sydney paper, which gave the names of those attending the conference. I am pleased now to know the figures were incorrect, but on my return to New South Wales I shall take an opportunity of getting them verified or denied by that paper, which is read by thousands of the working classes in the community.

Senator BARNES (Victoria) [2.55].—I am in favour of the amendment. The proposition, as I understand it, will mean the expenditure of millions of pounds, and the people are entitled to get the very best results possible from that expenditure. I know very well that we can get honorary workers to undertake almost any work—or rather they would attempt to do it. At one time this country was governed by honorary members of Parliament, but eventually the people discovered the wisdom of paying somebody to undertake this task and to hold them responsible. If we have honorary commissioners administering the affairs of this repatriation scheme—

Senator MILLEN.—They will not be asked to administer it.

Senator BARNES.—Perhaps they will not be administering it in the sense of actually disbursing the money, but they will stand in the relation of an advisory board to the Department, which will be guided by their counsel; and in the last analysis the commission will really be responsible for what the country may get out of the expenditure. It is not fair to the people that an honorary board of three or seven gentlemen should have the handling of the many millions of pounds that will be deposited in the Repatriation Fund, and we could not expect them, as honorary commissioners, to do justice to their duties. On the other hand, if men are paid, and paid well, we shall have a right to expect their best services, and to claim the whole of their time for the duties imposed upon them. Honorary commissioners will, in all probability, have business concerns of their own to look after, and if any one of them be called to account for his stewardship, he will be able to say, "Well, I had my own business to attend to, and I could not be expected to give all my time to this scheme; I know mistakes have been made, but these could have been avoided if I had been able to devote the whole of my time to the duties." In a matter like this we are all in a more or less uncharted sea, and we can only hope for the best possible results by obtaining the best men.

I am not particularly anxious that returned soldiers should have representation on the commission—not that I do not think we could not get men of proved capacity among them. I do not think that at all. What I am concerned about is that we should get the best possible men for the position, and if returned soldiers are not directly represented they will be represented indirectly as members of the Returned Soldiers Association, which body will take good care to place their views before the Minister responsible for the administration of the scheme. I urge the Minister to reconsider his decision, and not expect that honorary commissioners will be found to do this work satisfactorily.

We were reminded by an honorable senator who is not now in the chamber that the movement represented by members on this side of the Senate was itself largely built up by the honorary efforts of men who started our organization. We



admit the truth of that; but, after all, it was only because there was no other course open, because at that time there was no money with which to pay these honorary workers in the inauguration of our movement, but the position was remedied directly funds became available. The Government is no more entitled than is any outside body to expect service on "the nod." The country that expects work to be done for nothing will get results akin to the results of those who, in the past, did the legislative work of Australia for nothing. All these things seem to me to point very strongly to the unwisdom of the proposition put forward in this clause. I hope that if the larger number is retained the Minister will reconsider the idea of expecting the commissioners to work for nothing. I trust that they will be paid, and paid well.

Question.—That the word "seven" be left out (Senator NEEDHAM's amendment).—put. The Committee divided.

Ayes	...	...	5
Noes	...	...	20
			—
Majority	...	...	15

## AYES.

Barnes, J.	Needham, E.
Bolton, Lt.-Colonel	Teller:
Maughan, W. J. R.	McDougall, A.

## NOES.

Bakhap, T. J. K.	Plain, W.
Buzacott, R.	Pratten, H. E.
Crawford, T. W.	Reid, M.
Earle, J.	Rowell, Colonel
Fairbairn, G.	Russell, E. J.
Foll, H. S.	Senior, W.
Henderson, G.	Shannon, J. W.
Keating, J. H.	Thomas, J.
Lynch, P. J.	
Millen, E. D.	Teller:
Pearce, G. F.	de Largie, H.

## PAIRS.

O'Keefe, D. J.	Guthrie, R. S.
Guy, J.	Newland, J.

Question so resolved in the negative.

Amendment negatived.

Senator MILLEN (New South Wales) [3.5].—I should like, sir, with your permission to place on record the fact that in the last division list I was paired with Senator Gardiner, but unfortunately I overlooked the pair until it was too late for me to withdraw from the chamber.

Clause agreed to.

Clause 7 (Appointment of commissioners).

Senator NEEDHAM (Western Australia) [3.1].—Senator O'Keefe fore-

shadowed other amendments which have been circulated amongst honorable members. I accept the last division as a test of the feeling of the Committee, and do not intend to submit such amendments, which would have been consequential if the last amendment had been carried. There is, however, an amendment to clause 10 which I may submit.

Clause agreed to.

Clause 8—

The Commission may make recommendations to the Governor-General for regulations providing for the granting of assistance and benefits to Australian soldiers upon their discharge from service and to the children of deceased or incapacitated soldiers, and may advise upon such matters as may be expedient for the purpose of giving effect to this Act.

Senator Lt.-Colonel BOLTON (Victoria) [3.7].—I move

That the words "children of deceased or incapacitated soldiers," lines 5 and 6, be left out, with a view to insert in lieu thereof the following words:—"widow, children, or other dependants of deceased soldiers, or the wife, children, or other dependants of incapacitated soldiers."

I submit this amendment in order that the provision may be made more explicit to the understanding of those who are vitally concerned in its enactment.

Senator MILLEN (New South Wales—Vice-President of the Executive Council) [3.8].—I am not able to accept this amendment because if it were adopted it would carry the Bill very much beyond the compass of any reasonable repatriating measure. What the honorable senator asks the Committee to do is to say that by means of repatriation we shall look after these various classes of people—

Wife, father, mother, grandfather, grandmother, stepfather, stepmother, son, daughter, grandson, granddaughter, stepson, stepdaughter, brother, sister, half-brother, half-sister, adopted child, or mother-in-law.

These classes have nothing whatever to do with the principle of repatriation. If it is thought that the community owes some obligation to them the proper way to meet that case is by an amendment of the Pensions Act, which already makes provision for them. If that provision is not considered adequate enough, I suggest to Senator Bolton that he should move to get an increased pension allowance for them. I ask the honorable senator to recognise the difference between the work contemplated in this Bill and that work which is very properly carried out by



means of the Pensions Office. For that reason I cannot accept the amendment. I am appalled already at the classes of work which will fall upon the shoulders of those who have to administer this measure. If they are also to be charged with looking after, not only the immediate, but very remote, dependants of the soldiers, it will make the task simply impossible. It will complicate the scheme to such an extent that it will break down.

Senator EARLE (Tasmania) [3.10].—I intend to support the amendment. I do not think it is desirable that the law under which this system is to be established should be of a hard and fast character. I do not suppose that the repatriation trustees would entertain the idea of taking upon themselves the responsibility of repatriating the mothers-in-law and distant relatives of soldiers who have served in the war. But I can foresee cases where it will be very necessary that they should have that power under the law. There is no obligation on the part of trustees to extend to all these people the advantages of repatriation, but certainly the trustees should have the power under the parent Act which we are now considering to take into consideration certain cases of very great hardship. In my speech on the second reading I cited the case of a widow who sent four of her sons to the Front. One son has been killed; two sons are already wounded, and another son is about to go into action. Surely if that woman should require assistance—and I have no doubt that she will—the trustees ought to have the power to say that she has rendered such services to the nation by the voluntary sacrifice of the sons, who were going to bring to her in her old age luxury and comfort, that she is deserving of some consideration other than the hard and fast pension which is allowed.

Senator THOMAS.—No one objects to that, but is this the best Bill?

Senator EARLE.—This Bill is before the Senate now. Without making it compulsory upon the trustees to extend any particular benefit to these classes of people, at the same time they should have the power to do so if the circumstances demand it. Hence, notwithstanding the strong protest from the Minister, I intend to support Senator Bolton in trying to extend the powers of the trustees to meet

such cases as those which he has just mentioned.

Senator McDOUGALL (New South Wales) [3.14].—I intend to support the amendment. I cannot understand the explanation by the Minister. The clause reads—

The Commission may make recommendations to the Governor-General for regulations providing for the granting of assistance—

That only gives to the commissioners power to make regulations, which, of course, will have to be considered on their merits. It is not mandatory that the commissioners shall keep the whole of the dependants of soldiers for all time. We know that in the past mistakes have been made. America is still keeping the dependants of some soldiers who fought in the Civil War.

Senator MILLEN.—Exactly.

Senator McDOUGALL.—I know that disability, but this clause does not say that the trustees shall do so. It simply empowers the commissioners to make recommendations to the Governor-General for regulations so that they may grant assistance. Everybody agrees with Senator Bolton and myself that the widow has as much right to be considered as the children, or that the mother of children has as much right to be considered as the widow or the children. If it is a good thing to have the clause in the Bill it will be equally good to have it amended in the way which Senator Bolton desires. The adoption of the amendment would be no detriment to the Bill, and would not give rise to the grave results predicted by the Minister.

Senator NEEDHAM (Western Australia) [3.15].—I hope that the amendment will be carried. We have heard something about the necessity for humane treatment, and surely honorable senators will not overlook the case of the wife of a man who has laid down his life on the battlefield in defence of the Empire! Under the clause, as drafted, the wife is entirely ignored. If it be right that the children should be looked after under this scheme, it is surely right that the mother of those children should be looked after. Whilst the men are fighting the great battle for the defence of the Empire, their womenfolk are, in my opinion, fighting a much greater battle. They have to suffer anxiety and suspense. They dread the



sight of a postman or a telegraph messenger lest he should be bringing to them a message conveying the sad tidings that husband, father, brother, or son has been killed or wounded in action. I think that the Repatriation Commission should be charged with the work of looking after the mother of the soldier's children as well as after the children themselves. The acceptance of the amendment would secure consideration for the other dependants of dead or incapacitated soldiers referred to by Senator Bolton, and it would be an improvement upon the Bill.

Senator Lt.-Colonel BOLTON (Victoria) [3.18].—The Vice-President of the Executive Council referred in a light and jocular manner to the genealogical tree of the dead or incapacitated soldier. The vein in which he has chosen to approach the subject does not indicate that he regards the purpose of the Bill in any very earnest spirit. If that is the Minister's attitude upon this question of repatriation, it gives but poor promise of what is likely to be done under the operation of the Bill. Many of the dependants of dead or incapacitated soldiers, and, possibly amongst them grandfathers, sisters, nieces, and others referred to, may be unable to earn a living for themselves, and may have been dependent on the earnings of the dead or incapacitated soldiers. The Minister's jocularity is entirely uncalled for, and is not in good taste.

Senator MILLEN (New South Wales—Vice-President of the Executive Council) [3.20].—I accept in a becoming spirit of humility the rebuke which has fallen from the honorable senator who has just resumed his seat. I hope in future to profit by his lectures as to the proper deportment of a member of this Chamber. I should like honorable senators to bear in mind the possibility of creating very serious trouble if we do not lay down a clear line of demarcation between repatriation and pensions. No one can have any personal concern in this matter. I am as anxious as is any one else to treat in the most liberal way possible those who have rendered services of incalculable value to the country. If we are to consider individual cases we shall not establish the scheme on firm ground. It is necessary that we should adopt a definite principle. I have endeavoured to adhere to the principle that, in our

repatriation scheme, we should deal with one sphere of work, and by means of pensions we should deal with another. If there is to be overlapping it will lead to endless complications. A pension is provided for the widow of a soldier killed at the Front, and if honorable senators think that it is quite insufficient, surely the common-sense proceeding is to increase the amount of the pension, and not to ask that another Department should be called into existence to supplement it. Between the War Pensions Act and this Bill every possible case for assistance will be met. My object in asking honorable senators to vote against the amendment is not to exclude from consideration the dependants of dead or incapacitated soldiers referred to by Senator Bolton, but to preserve the distinction between pensions and repatriation, to prevent the overlapping of work, and two Departments dealing with the same individuals.

Senator Lt.-Colonel BOLTON (Victoria) [3.22].—I have already said that, in my opinion, the matter of repatriation cannot be separated from the matters of pensions and amelioration. When the Repatriation Commission come to put this measure into operation they will certainly find that to be so. They will discover that this Bill will embrace pensions, amelioration, and repatriation.

Senator FOLL (Queensland) [3.23].—I support the amendment moved by Senator Bolton, because, if the widow or other dependants of dead or incapacitated soldiers are forced to rely on the pensions granted them, in many cases they will have to struggle along on a mere pittance. If they received assistance under the repatriation scheme they might be able to start in business on their own account just as would the returned soldier, and might be able later to flourish and enjoy some of the good things of life. I do not see why widows and other dependants of the soldiers should not receive as generous treatment as the soldiers themselves. I agree with Senator Needham when he says that the biggest sacrifices made during the war are those made by the women-folk. I think that the repatriation scheme should embrace ample provision for them. I hope that the amendment will be accepted.



Question—That the words proposed to be left out be left out—put. The Committee divided.

Ayes ..	..	..	7
Noes ..	..	..	16

Majority ..	..	9
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AYES.

Earle, J.	McDougall, A.
Foll, H. S.	Needham, E.
Grant, J.	Teller:
Maughan, W. J. R.	Bolton, Lt.-Colonel

NOES.

Bakhap, T. J. K.	Pratten, H. E.
Buzacott, R.	Reid, M.
Crawford, T. W.	Rowell, Colonel
de Largie, H.	Russell, E. J.
Fairbairn, G.	Shannon, J. W.
Henderson, G.	Thomas, J.
Keating, J. H.	Teller:
Lynch, P. J.	Plain, W.
Pearce, G. F.	

PAIRS.

O'Keefe, D. J.	Guthrie, R. S.
Gardiner, A.	Millen, E. D.
Guy, J.	Newland, J.

Question so resolved in the negative.

Amendment negatived.

Clause agreed to.

Clause 9—

(1) There shall be a State Repatriation Board for each State to consist of seven members.

Senator Lt.-Colonel BOLTON (Victoria) [3.28].—I move—

That the word "seven" be left out with a view to insert in lieu thereof the word "five." The object of this amendment is to reduce the number of members of the State boards to five, who, I think, should be paid for the work they will have to do. The duties of the members of the boards will take up the whole of their time and attention if justice is to be done to them. The reasons I advanced as to the desirability of reducing the number of members to form the Repatriation Commission apply with equal force to the reduction of the number of members of the State Repatriation Boards, and to their payment.

Senator MILLEN (New South Wales—Vice-President of the Executive Council) [3.30].—I do not propose to occupy the time of the Committee except to express just one view. This proposal is part of the scheme that is founded on an effort to combine the assistance of private citizens with an official Department. I admit that it is an experi-

ment, I admit that it is an innovation, but I ask the Committee to recognise that it is part of the scheme, and that by passing this clause they will be giving an opportunity to that experiment to demonstrate whether it is a practicable one or not. There is no precedent to guide us in this matter. It may work out unsatisfactorily; on the other hand, it may not. It is an expedient which seeks to combine two desirable elements, and I appeal to honorable senators to let that experiment demonstrate its worth by actual work.

Senator NEEDHAM (Western Australia) [3.32].—Is it the intention of the Government to pay the members of the State boards?

Senator MILLEN.—No.

Senator NEEDHAM.—Their services will be given in an honorary capacity?

Senator MILLEN.—Yes. As is usual with such boards, all their reasonable expenses will be met.

Senator NEEDHAM.—I asked this question of the Vice-President of the Executive Council in order that I might know what to do with a projected amendment by Senator O'Keefe in clause 10. In view of the answer which has been given I shall not proceed with that amendment.

Senator Colonel ROWELL (South Australia) [3.33].—To my mind, if it be necessary for seven persons to be appointed to the central commission, it is equally imperative that seven members shall be appointed to each State board. These boards, I presume, will be composed of men who possess a knowledge of the land and of various trades. Senator Bolton has submitted a proposal to reduce the number of members of these boards from seven to five. But in view of the fact that seven members are to constitute the central commission, and that the State boards will not have less work to do, I shall support the Government on this occasion.

Senator McDougall (New South Wales) [3.34].—The Vice-President of the Executive Council has stated that the members of the State boards will receive reasonable expenses. I think that they should be patriotic enough to forego expenses. Of course, men who have to travel to the Seat of Government should be reimbursed their out-of-pocket expenditure.



Senator THOMAS.—Suppose that some person in New South Wales is appointed from the country?

Senator McDOUGALL.—If he is a good business man he will lose nothing by his appointment. I want these gentlemen to be patriotic. When I was speaking yesterday honorable senators opposite loudly proclaimed that the members of the central commission should be patriotic, and should give their services for nothing. I want those honorable senators to be consistent. I would like to see the number of members of the State boards reduced from seven to five.

Senator MILLEN.—The honorable senator wishes to limit the opportunity for exhibiting patriotism.

Senator McDOUGALL.—If the Vice-President of the Executive Council thinks that, by all means let us increase the number of members on these State boards to twenty-five. At the present time there are men engaged in repatriation work who are rendering splendid service for nothing.

Senator DE LARGIE.—Would the honorable senator expect a working man to travel from Broken Hill to attend meetings of a State board without being reimbursed his expenses?

Senator McDOUGALL.—Senator de Largie need not worry on that point. There will be no working men upon these boards.

Senator MILLEN.—The honorable senator can accept my assurance that there will be.

Senator McDOUGALL.—If that be so, they will have to be paid if they come from any part of New South Wales. That was one of the arguments which I urged yesterday in favour of the appointment of paid men to the central Commission. Honorable senators opposite are facing both ways on this question. We cannot expect a working man to lose a week in coming from Broken Hill, or Sydney, without being paid for his services.

Senator DE LARGIE.—The members of the State boards will get only their expenses.

Senator McDOUGALL.—If these State boards arrange to sit at night-time,

plenty of men will be found who are willing to serve upon them in an honorary capacity, but not otherwise.

Senator GRANT (New South Wales) [3.37].—It appears to me that, owing to the application of motive-power to production, the people of this country are now able to produce, not merely sufficient for their own requirements, but sufficient to keep a large army in addition. The proposal now before the Committee is not one to repatriate returned soldiers, but to provide substantial positions for persons who are not prepared to come out into the open and battle for themselves. I venture to say that this is a proposal to foist upon the taxpayers a considerable number of men who would not give one moment of their time to any private citizen without being paid for it. Yet some honorable senators seriously expect them, in discharging the duties of the proposed State boards, to give their services gratuitously. Instead of the arrangement being an economical one, it appears to me to be an effort to foist a considerable number of men on the already overburdened taxpayers of this country. Apparently the Minister can do nothing, even of the most trivial character, without the aid of a board. He seems to have entirely lost all the vigour and vim which he possessed a few years ago. It is now proposed that we shall have, not merely a central Commission, meeting in Melbourne, but a board sitting in each State. In addition, there will be a permanently paid staff to carry out the instructions of these boards. The position reminds me of a story I read in regard to a lot of flies hanging on to a cow in a meadow, and holding corroborees and Parliaments of their own, without doing any good or useful work. One day the cow rolled over and crushed them. Similarly I think that the taxpayers of this country will one day roll over and crush this multiplicity of boards. The Vice-President of the Executive Council is possessed of more than sufficient ability to carry out this work unaided. He has done nothing else now for a considerable number of months. It must be remembered, too, that he will not be called upon to attend to the details of the scheme. He will have at his disposal a paid staff of clerks, both in Melbourne and in each of the



States, who will do that. Yet he wants a little army of seven commissioners to sit in Melbourne—

The CHAIRMAN.—Order! The question before the Chair is the constitution of the State boards.

Senator GRANT.—I was merely making an incidental reference to the central Commission. The proposal now before us is not an effort to repatriate returned soldiers, but to repatriate those who are well able to look after themselves. Nobody can tell me that these positions will be purely honorary.

Senator EARLE.—They would not be if the honorable senator had his way.

Senator GRANT.—No; each representative upon them would be paid a specific sum straight out. I am entirely opposed to these so-called honorary boards, because they are expensive and unsatisfactory. They are supposed to give their services gratis. These State boards will probably get two or three guineas per day.

Senator MILLEN.—They will not be paid fees at all.

Senator GRANT.—But their travelling expenses will be paid, and how much will they amount to? If the Vice-President of the Executive Council is determined to adopt the "go-slow" policy of the Industrial Workers of the World, his proper course is to invite applications for the positions, and to appoint men who are capable of filling them. But there is no occasion for him to do that. The honorable gentleman is quite able to look after this matter himself. If he is not, he can appoint more men.

Senator MILLEN.—There would be more flies to crush then.

Senator GRANT.—I am surprised that the cow does not roll over and crush some of the flies opposite to me. Nowadays, nothing can be done without the establishment of expensive boards. One ceases to wonder why the working man says that eight hours a day is too long to work, when he observes so many persons fastening themselves on to boards—so many parasites becoming attached to governmental institutions. If these men would only go out and take a hand with the plough, there would be no occasion

for the working man to labour more than four hours per day.

The CHAIRMAN.—Order! Will the honorable senator connect his remarks with the proposal before the Chair to reduce the number of members of the State boards from seven to five?

Senator GRANT.—I am trying to point out to honorable senators opposite the danger of appointing board after board in this manner. If they do the farmers, who work long hours producing food for these parasites to eat, will say to themselves:—"What are they, anyhow? If they are not going to do any work we will cease working ourselves; we will put in only three or four hours a day, and let these men go out and find food for themselves." Then these people will be in a position of the flies when the cow rolled over, and will be squashed out of existence.

Senator Lt.-Colonel BOLTON (Victoria) [3.46].—I know of a certain honorary board not a thousand miles from here, the whole of the work of which, by reason of the board being honorary, was thrown on the shoulders of the secretary, who was getting between £700 and £800 a year, and the upshot was that he broke down utterly in health, and has been away from duty now for several months. The net result of the honorary system is that somebody else has to do the work, and the honorary people get the honour and glory of it.

Senator PLAIN (Victoria) [3.47].—I should like to support my colleague, Senator Bolton, on this occasion, but cannot see my way to do so. I look on the State Boards as being of even more importance than the Federal Commission. Senator Bolton desires to get the most efficient board possible, so as to safeguard the interests of the soldiers or their dependants in every possible way, but that cannot be done merely by appointing a salaried board, as is proved by the history of the closer settlement movement in all the States. That matter has been controlled and supervised by a salaried board in every State, and in every case to date the system has absolutely failed to solve the problem of land settlement. Victoria has suffered as severely as any, and a Royal Commission was recently appointed to investigate its closer settlement policy. That was an honorary board, of which I



was a member. I gave two solid years to inspecting every estate minutely, and taking evidence from every settler regarding his financial position and surroundings. The result was that in order to save the settlement of this country we had to write off a huge sum. We realized that it was better to do that, and save the settlers and make them contented, rather than load and crush them as in the past. The closer settlement policy of Victoria is to-day on a basis such as never existed before, and the settlers have some prospect of making a comfortable living, and a home for their families, which in the past many of them could not do. I can name men in this State, particularly Mr. Manifold, who would make splendid members of an honorary board. I could also name others of equal integrity who would rather submit to have their heads chopped off than deceive returned soldiers. If an honorary board is created of men of the capacity and integrity of Mr. Manifold, the future of these settlers can be safely left in their hands. If, however, the Government have to call for applications for paid positions, so many applications will be put in, and so much influence will be brought to bear that valuable time will be lost, and men may be selected who have not had the necessary experience, although desirous of doing their best in the interest of the soldiers, and the whole business will fail. If we are going to follow a system that is likely to break down our closer settlement policy in the future, we shall be doing a great injustice to the future generations of this State. That is what I wish to avoid, and that is why I am not voting with my colleague on this occasion. If the boards are reduced to five we shall not get so many men with wide experience, and there is always the risk that illness may reduce the number of those who can attend to two or three.

Question—That the word “seven” proposed to be left out be left out—put. The Committee divided.

Ayes .. .. .	5
Noes .. .. .	17
Majority .. .. .	12

AYES.	
Bolton, Lt.-Colonel	Needham, E.
Maughan, W. J. R.	Teller:
McDougall, A.	Grant, J.
Senator Plain.	

NOES.	
Buzacott, R.	Plain, W.
Crawford, T. W.	Pratten, H. E.
Earle, J.	Reid, M.
Fairbairn, G.	Rowell, Colonel
Foll, H. S.	Russell, E. J.
Henderson, G.	Shannon, J. W.
Keating, J. H.	Thomas, J.
Lynch, P. J.	Teller:
Pearce, G. F.	de Largie, H.
PAIRS.	
Gardiner, A.	Millen, E. J.
Guy, J.	Newland, J.
O’Keefe, D. J.	Guthrie, R. S.

Question so resolved in the negative.  
Amendment negatived.  
Clause agreed to.  
Clauses 10 and 11 agreed to.  
Clause 12—  
1. The Governor-General may appoint local committees within a State.

Senator MILLEN (New South Wales—Vice-President of the Executive Council) [3.57].—I move—

That the words “or Territory” be inserted after the word “State.”

Senator GRANT (New South Wales) [3.58].—I support the amendment. At Canberra, we have an area of about 900 square miles of land, which up to date has not received the attention, in connexion with the proposal for repatriation, which I think it is entitled to. I have made application for, but have not yet received, a report from Mr. Allen, Fruit Inspector, New South Wales, or Mr. Wilkinson, the Commonwealth Analyst, as to the quality of the soil, which I believe is suitable for fruit-growing and other purposes. From my own personal knowledge of the country, I know it is in many respects as good as, and I have no doubt in some respects superior to, some of the land that has already been bought.

Amendment agreed to.  
Senator Lt.-Colonel BOLTON (Victoria) [3.59].—I move—

That the following words be added to sub-clause 1:—“each of such committees shall consist of eight persons, half of whom shall be returned soldiers within the meaning of this Act.”

As these local committees will have the responsibility, I presume, of preparing most of the cases for repatriation, returned soldiers should be represented on them, and although the Minister has said this will be done, I should like, in this instance, to have it set out in the Bill.

Progress reported.  
Senate adjourned at 4.2 p.m.



## House of Representatives.

Friday, 27 July, 1917.

Mr. SPEAKER took the chair at 11 a.m., and read prayers.

### SECTARIAN PAMPHLETS.

Mr. TUDOR.—This morning's *Argus*, referring to a debate in this House last night, says—

When the result of the division had been announced, the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Tudor) asked Mr. Hughes across the table: "Shall we ever have a chance of a vote on the main question of the appointment of a Commission?" "I will provide a day for you to discuss Dr. Mannix and Critchley-Parker any time you like," was Mr. Hughes' reply.

Is that a correct report of the reply of the Prime Minister?

Mr. HUGHES.—The report is incorrect. I told the honorable member that I would not grant a day.

### THE NATION AND THE LABOUR LEADER.

Mr. BRENNAN.—Is the Prime Minister aware that certain newspapers printed and circulated in Great Britain—notably the *Nation* and the *Labour Leader*—are refused admission to this country? Does he approve of discrimination against Australia and other Dominions in this matter?

Mr. HUGHES.—I was not aware that these newspapers are not admitted into Australia. It may be that they fall within the class of journals which publish statements tending to seriously prejudice recruiting.

Mr. BRENNAN.—Then why is their circulation allowed in England?

Mr. JOSEPH COOK.—They have conscription in England.

Mr. ARCHIBALD.—And Zeppelins.

Mr. HUGHES.—The *Nation* I believe to be the organ of what may be termed the revolutionary, as distinguished from the nationalist, party in Ireland, and the *Labour Leader* represents that section of the Labour party in Great Britain which finds its protagonists in Mr. Ramsay MacDonald and Mr. Snowden, and I cannot conceive anything more cal-

culated to prejudice the interests of Australia and the Empire than the utterances of those two gentlemen.

### SHIPBUILDING.

Mr. RILEY.—Is the Prime Minister in a position to make a statement as to when our shipbuilding industry will start?

Mr. HUGHES.—I think that Thursday next is the date fixed for receiving the replies of the various unions that have been consulted. Yesterday was the day fixed originally, but the engineers asked for an extra week, because they found it necessary to take a ballot on the questions submitted to them. I have advised all the States of the position, and, in anticipation of the acceptance of our proposals by the unions, requested them to clear what clips they have, or in the case of existing slips that are not suitable for the class of vessel to be laid down, to make such alterations as may be necessary. Preparations are also in hand for procuring and storing material needed in the earlier stages of shipbuilding. In short, all the preliminary steps are being taken in the expectation that the unions will co-operate, and when the favorable decision of the unions has been received, the enterprise will be launched immediately.

Mr. FALKINER.—What guarantee has the Prime Minister received from the unions that they will perform what they promised? The other day their representatives refused to take the word of the right honorable gentleman; why, then, should he take their word?

Mr. HUGHES.—I have, and can have, no other guarantee than the recognition by the men that their interests are as much involved in this matter as are those of the community generally. No one can justly accuse me of building extravagant hopes on arrangements with organized labour because I know from long experience that in every union there are foolish persons ever ready to counsel ill-advised courses, but I am satisfied that if the unions accept our proposals they will do so with a clear understanding of what is involved, and that there will be no organized departure from any of the terms of an accepted agreement. Were I a private employer I should, on the acceptance



by the unions of the Government's proposals, embark on the enterprise confident that nothing in the way of labour troubles need be feared. I cannot, of course, guarantee that there will be no departure from the agreement, if made, but I have never known men to give more serious consideration to a project, or to be more in earnest in wishing to co-operate, than were those with whom I conferred in regard to this matter.

Mr. FENTON.—What Department will control the shipbuilding industry?

Mr. HUGHES.—The vessels to be constructed are to be standardized, and the industrial conditions to be observed during their construction will be the same in the Commonwealth, the State, and private dockyards. Ships under construction in the Commonwealth dockyards will, of course, be under the control of the Minister for the Navy, the others will be under State or private control, subject to a general supervision, for which I shall be responsible. The Minister for the Navy reminds me that we are now settling the industrial conditions, arranging for the supply of materials, preparing slips, and taking other preliminary steps.

Mr. FENTON.—If the proposal does not bear fruit, will private shipbuilders be allowed to undertake the construction of the necessary vessels?

Mr. JOSEPH COOK.—Any one may build under the conditions when we have settled them.

Mr. HUGHES.—The State authorities and private individuals will be virtually contractors for the carrying out of our work, and we shall see that the industrial conditions as stated in the agreement are observed and that the vessels are constructed according to specification.

## DUTY ON CATALOGUES.

Mr. JENSEN.—Yesterday, the honorable member for Parkes asked a question about the collection by the Postmaster-General's Department of duty on catalogues. I am informed that section 35 of the Customs Act provides that—

Goods imported through the Post Office shall be subject to the control of the Customs equally with goods otherwise imported.

Catalogues and circulars are specifically provided for in the Tariff. If imported from the United Kingdom, these goods are subject to duty at the rate of 8d. per lb.

or 35 per cent., whichever rate returns the higher amount, and, if from other countries, at the rate of 10d. per lb. or 40 per cent. The volume which I hold in my hand is a sample of some of the catalogues that are sent through the post. Many of them weigh as much as 12 or 15 lbs. each, and are expensively and beautifully got up. It is because of their great weight, and because they are taxable under the Customs Tariff Act, that the Postal Department is taking the action complained of.

Mr. WATKINS.—Is it not a fact that for some time past these catalogues have been sent direct to clients in Australia instead of through agents, the manufacturer thus saving postage?

Mr. WEBSTER.—As the subject is rather intricate, I ask the honorable member to put his question on the notice-paper.

Mr. PAGE.—What is referred to is an ordinary business course.

Mr. WEBSTER.—No, it is not. I know what is going on.

## EXPORT OF WOOL TOPS.

Mr. HIGGS asked the Prime Minister, *upon notice*—

What are the details of the arrangement made by the Government with Messrs. Whidson Bros. Ltd., Relby-lane, Sydney, and the Colonial Combining, Spinning, and Weaving Company Ltd., 62 Pitt-street, Sydney, to share in the profits accruing from the export of wool tops?

Mr. HUGHES.—The Wool Committee has been asked to supply the information, but it is not yet to hand.

Mr. HIGGS asked the Minister for Trade and Customs, *upon notice*—

How many pounds of wool tops on which bounty was paid were exported from Australia to Japan during the period from 1st January, 1908, to 31st December, 1915?

Mr. JENSEN.—The information is being obtained.

## INCOME TAX.

Mr. HIGGS asked the Treasurer, *upon notice*—

Whether, in order that members may give proper consideration to the proposals of the Government, as announced in connexion with the War-time Profits Tax Assessment Bill, he will state what increases the Government intend to propose in the rate of income tax?

Sir JOHN FORREST.—This, and all other similar matters, will be dealt with in the Budget.

### APPLES IN COOL STORAGE.

Mr. FINLAYSON asked the Minister for Trade and Customs, *upon notice*—

1. Whether he will order that a return be prepared showing—

(a) The quantity of apples now in cool storage in Australia;

(b) The owners of stocks so stored;

(c) The time the fruit has been in storage?

2. Whether it is proposed to release any quantity of this fruit so as to relieve the present short supplies on the open market?

Mr. JENSEN.—The answers to the honorable member's questions are as follow:—

1. Yes.

2. The matter will be considered.

### ENTERTAINMENTS TAX.

#### SOLDIERS' RECEPTION.

Mr. WATKINS asked the Treasurer, *upon notice*—

What is the reason that local entertainments held by farewell and reception committees are brought under the Entertainments Tax Act, seeing they are purely for the benefit of soldiers going to and returning from the front?

Sir JOHN FORREST.—The Acting Commissioner of Taxation states that—

Any entertainments which are held by public committees for sending off or welcoming home soldiers, are being treated as exempt from tax under section 13 of the Act, when the expenses of the entertainment do not exceed 50 per cent. of the receipts; also, that such entertainments are exempt from tax under section 12A of the Act, if the whole of the takings are devoted for the benefit of the soldiers, without any charge on the takings for any expenses of the entertainment.

### WAR PENSIONS.

Mr. LAMOND asked the Minister representing the Minister for Defence, *upon notice*—

1. Whether the Minister's attention has been called to the refusal of pensions to returned soldiers, and other members of the Expeditionary Forces on the grounds that their "incapacity was not the result of employment in connexion with warlike operations"?

2. Whether the Minister will take early steps to remedy what appears to be an injustice?

Sir JOHN FORREST.—The answers to the honorable member's questions are as follow:—

1. No.

2. If the honorable member will give me particulars of any cases, inquiries will be made.

### RAILWAYS BILL.

#### SECOND READING.

Debate resumed from 26th July (*vide* page 569), on motion by Mr. WATT—

That this Bill be now read a second time.

Mr. J. H. CATTS (Cook) [11.17].—I appreciate the fact that the introduction of this Bill is another and an important link in the development of Australian nationalism. I also appreciate the manner in which the measure has been introduced by the Minister, and the information he has supplied to the House. The first thing that strikes my notice is that the figures given by the Minister are the amplest vindication of the day-labour system in the construction of this national undertaking. The honorable gentleman has given an explanation and justification for the increase of expenditure on its construction over and above what was originally estimated. If honorable members will take the speech of the Minister, and add up the figures, they will find that there a very small amount is unaccounted for. It is also to be borne in mind that, after the estimate was made, the cost of material, labour, and everything else for the construction of the line, increased very much indeed.

The Minister admitted that, in one of its important aspects, this is a defence line, and I am glad to note that some of the Ministers, at any rate, have not altogether forgotten that there are interests in Australia that need to be attended to, and that one of these is preparation for the defence of the country. Just as expenditure on any national work is very largely wasted if that work is stopped in the middle, and does not accomplish its purpose, so it would be a great mistake if we stopped short at the arranging of our defence lines. It ought to be the beginning of railway building as one of the great bases on which the defence system of the country must be reared. It is now several years ago since the present High Commissioner, the Honorable Andrew Fisher, recognised the absolute necessity, as Leader of the Government, for the construction of strategic railways in various parts of Australia. But it is one of the evidences of the desertion of Australia's best interests that we have heard nothing about those strategic railways which the Leader of the then Government told



us were urgently required. Apparently, nothing is being done to further a project which it was agreed on all sides was absolutely essential. I hope the matter will not be altogether forgotten.

The unifying of our railway gauges has been a question of pressing urgency for many years; and every day it is allowed to remain in abeyance the vital interests of the country are being neglected. There are difficulties in the way, but the Government is charged with the responsibility of the defence of Australia, and the preparations for that defence. Although the difficulties are great they are not beyond the power of the Commonwealth to solve, and the Commonwealth has a better opportunity for solving them, with the authority it has to-day, than it ever had before, and probably more than it will have, when the war has subsided.

The whole of the railways of the Commonwealth must inevitably come under Commonwealth control. The necessity of defence should make that fact apparent now; and the time to prepare for changes of this kind is not when the enemy is at our gates, but when we have time at our disposal.

Mr. HEITMANN.—The railways were not under the control of the Government in England, and yet the Government took charge of them at the outbreak of the war.

Mr. J. H. CATTS.—It is very late in the day when war breaks out for the Commonwealth to take over the management of the railways.

Mr. FOWLER.—There should be a system ready for any contingency.

Mr. J. H. CATTS.—Quite so; but at present nothing is ready.

Mr. FOWLER.—Arrangements could be made without taking over the railways.

Mr. J. H. CATTS.—We should be prepared by years of practice and co-ordination. To start an entirely new system of management over a continent like this, to meet such an emergency as the outbreak of war, is to invite disaster.

Mr. WATT.—The State railway administrations have, on several occasions, been represented at conferences, and asked to prepare for such an emergency.

Mr. J. H. CATTS.—I know that, but, so far as I can gather, nothing serious has been done in the way of preparation

for Australian defence; and it is too late when war breaks out to commence to harmonize the management of the railway system. Germany's great power in this war has been largely because of her foresight in organizing national resources. Practically the whole of the engineering shops of Germany had contracts divided up amongst them, and have been encouraged to train their workmen and install machinery which would lend itself to a large output of munitions. Germany did not wait until the outbreak of war to get her workshops ready, so that the whole of the nation's resources could at once be mobilized for defence. For this Germany was preparing for years.

Mr. ARCHIBALD.—Do you think, then, that a nation should be an armed barracks?

Mr. J. H. CATTS.—I think the present war has shown that no nation at the present time can afford to be unprepared for such an event as war. I regard Australia as in danger to-day; and preparations for the defence of the country are absolutely urgent. That is one of the reasons why I am bitterly opposed to this Government, which I regard as the most un-Australian this country ever had. It is absolutely neglecting the vital interests of Australia.

Sir WILLIAM IRVINE.—What do you say the Government ought to do?

Mr. J. H. CATTS.—I say that the Government ought to prepare for the defence of Australia, and it is doing absolutely nothing.

Sir WILLIAM IRVINE.—What ought the Government to do?

Mr. J. H. CATTS.—What ought the Government to do? In July last the Government decided upon the training of the whole manhood of Australia for home defence; this was deliberately decided in view of information at the disposal of the Government.

Mr. POYNTON.—Not this Government.

Mr. J. H. CATTS.—I said "the Government." The Government then had the same Prime Minister as now, but in his absence from the Commonwealth there was a little more Australianism in the Government to decide on measures for Australian defence. As soon as the Prime Minister came back, the whole thing went overboard.

Mr. FALKNER.—And other things, too!

Mr. J. H. CATTS.—But this was the most urgent. I have come to the conclusion that the reason for this attitude of the Government is that there are too many gentlemen from the British Isles in it, and that they are dominating the Administration. There appears to be no balance of the duties we owe the Empire and Australia. It is all for the Empire and nothing for Australia.

Mr. JOSEPH COOK.—Pause for a moment and think of something nastier to say!

Mr. J. H. CATTS.—I am not saying this because I desire to be offensive; and I hope the honorable member will believe me when I say that I have no personal feeling against any member of the House. I have certainly no feeling against the right honorable member for Parramatta.

Mr. JOSEPH COOK.—You have a peculiar way of dissembling your love.

Mr. SPEAKER.—I remind the honorable member for Cook that the Bill relates to the construction and management of Commonwealth railways.

Mr. J. H. CATTS.—And the construction and management of Commonwealth railways is a matter vitally concerned with the defence of Australia.

Mr. SPEAKER.—This Bill does not deal with the defence of Australia, and it would not be proper to discuss defence, except so far as it might be connected with the question before the House.

Mr. JOSEPH COOK.—A lot of water has passed under the bridge since the honorable member desired to pay employees on the railways 8s. per day.

Mr. J. H. CATTS.—Yes; the cost of living has very largely increased.

Mr. MATHEWS.—The minimum wage in the State railways then was 6s. per day.

Mr. J. H. CATTS.—The minimum wage at that time was less than 8s., and when I moved for a minimum of 8s. per day and a maximum working day of eight hours, there was no railway system in Australia that had that principle in operation. Even to-day there are shifts of ten and twelve hours on every Australian railway system.

Mr. HEITMANN.—Shifts of ten and twelve hours throughout the week?

Mr. J. H. CATTS.—Yes.

Mr. HEITMANN.—That is not true.

Mr. J. H. CATTS.—Are there not night officers on the Western Australian railways working more than eight hours?

Mr. HEITMANN.—One small section is doing so.

Mr. J. H. CATTS.—The honorable member had better be careful. He denied my statement, and immediately had to retract.

Mr. HEITMANN.—Listening to the honorable member, I judged him to be an expert, particularly in defence.

Mr. J. H. CATTS.—I may tell the honorable member that I had much to do with the railway organizations of Australia over a number of years, and I think I am as well informed as any other honorable member about the industrial conditions of the Australian railway systems. I repeat that there is not one railway system in the Commonwealth that has a maximum working day of eight hours, and I endeavoured at the very inception of the Commonwealth railway system to lay down conditions which would be based on a recognition of a maximum working day of eight hours.

Another reason why I think the railways of Australia must inevitably come under Commonwealth control is associated with the unification of the State debts. The Commonwealth has decided upon the unification of State debts, although the Government have done nothing to carry that proposal to completion.

Sir WILLIAM IRVINE.—That unification merely means a bookkeeping arrangement.

Mr. J. H. CATTS.—Yes; but the financial conditions arising out of this war will probably compel the unification of Australian finance.

Sir WILLIAM IRVINE.—Hear, hear!

Mr. J. H. CATTS.—And the pressing problem of defence will tend in the direction of Commonwealth control of the railways. These two great factors are operating towards the one end, and that is Commonwealth control of the railways of Australia and the debts associated with them.

Although this east-west railway has cost the Commonwealth a large amount of money, I hope that the staff and equipment will not be dispersed, but that the work of constructing the north-south line will be proceeded with. It would be false economy to scatter the staff all over Australia, having regard to the fact that



by now it must have been trained to work as an efficient organization. I do not say that we should largely add to the staff, but in its present state it should be transferred, and the north-south line should be proceeded with, in sections, as fast as the staff can build it. I am certain we can do that. There is no doubt that there is a large amount of wealth in Australia which could be exchanged in such a way as to provide for the financing of the whole of these national railways, including the north-south line, as well as the changes of gauge. I regard the north-south line as being of urgent importance, equally with the one from east to west. There is also the line from Jervis Bay to the Capital, and the linking up of the Capital with the main line to Melbourne. That also is a work of urgent importance. Portion of the line has been built, and it would be certainly a waste of the expenditure incurred up to date if that line were to be left in its present incomplete state.

I do not see why both the east-west and the north-south railways should not be regarded as developmental lines. Previously our ideas of development have associated themselves only with the growing of wheat and wool, but, according to geological experts, Australia should be the greatest oil-producing country in the world. I understand that the great oil wells come from sunken sea forests. There are forests in the ocean similar to those on land, and as convulsions of the earth have taken place, and the sea beds have risen, those forests have been covered over, and big strata of oil have been created.

Mr. FOWLER.—There are a good many conflicting theories on that point.

Mr. J. H. CATTS.—I believe there are strata of oil in Australia.

Mr. JOSEPH COOK.—The trouble is that we have indications of oil all over Australia, and cannot get it.

Mr. J. H. CATTS.—Because the Government employ a man who knows nothing about oil, and spends £65,000 in boring for it. The first essential is the employment of an oil expert. Oil geology has been specialized.

Mr. JOSEPH COOK.—The present Government did not employ this expert. Why did not the honorable member at-

tend to this matter when his party had six years in office?

Mr. J. H. CATTS.—If these things were neglected in the past, that is no reason why they should not be attended to now.

Mr. JOSEPH COOK.—Everything you say is a vote of censure on past administration.

Mr. J. H. CATTS.—I do not care what it is. I found that in the organization of the Union Oil Company of San Francisco an Australian was occupying a prominent position, and in conversation with me he asserted that it was utterly useless to employ an ordinary geological expert to test country for oil. No American company would dream of doing such a thing. The oil business has developed in such a way that it is essential for an expert oil geologist to be employed. I believe that in South Australia there are large deposits of subterranean oil, which will never be developed if left to private enterprise.

Mr. FOWLER.—Why have not the numerous water bores that have been put down in Australia struck oil?

Mr. J. H. CATTS.—Probably they have not been sunk in the right spot. The whole of central Australia is an old sea bed.

Mr. SPEAKER.—This discussion on oil has nothing to do with the Commonwealth railways.

Mr. J. H. CATTS.—The discussion on oil is associated with the purpose of this Commonwealth railway, which I regard as a developmental line. Some honorable members have spoken of wheat and wool in connexion with this railway, and surely I am justified in making reference to the development of our oil deposits.

Mr. SPEAKER.—The honorable member will not be in order in discussing generally the production of oil, though he may refer to that incidentally in connexion with the construction and management of Commonwealth railways.

Mr. J. H. CATTS.—Apparently we have been taught to speak in terms of wheat and wool, and we are to be limited strictly to them.

Mr. SPEAKER.—I do not wish to limit the honorable member's scope of discussion more than is necessary under the

Standing Orders. Whilst he will be perfectly in order in referring to different industries, as subjects for development in connexion with the railway, he would not be in order in discussing the question of wool growing or the relative merits of different clips of wool, for instance, although he might refer to the development of the wool industry in its relation to Commonwealth railways.

Mr. J. H. CATTS.—I am sorry that I am so dense that so often when I rise to speak you consider it necessary, Mr. Speaker, to call me to order, because my remarks are not relevant to the question under discussion. It may be also part of my denseness that I think I have noticed the same tendency much more aggravated on the part of some other honorable members without correction.

Mr. SPEAKER.—Order! The honorable member must discuss the Bill.

Mr. J. H. CATTS.—I will say no more.

Mr. RICHARD FOSTER (Wakefield) [11.44].—In moving the second reading of the Bill, the Minister informed the House that he regarded the railway as a legacy. Unfortunately, the country and Parliament are very seriously concerned in this legacy, and whilst I know that the Minister, in his official capacity, is not responsible for anything that was done until just recently, the very mention of the railway as a legacy indicates some necessity for a perfectly clear understanding as to how Parliament and the country stand in relation to the cost of the line. I very much regret to say that the information before us is altogether inadequate to justify this House in dealing with such an important question, involving as it does the creation of a new and costly Railway Department, which, if not unnecessary, is, at all events, inadvisable in these times of financial stress and strain.

Mr. WATT.—It involves nothing of the sort.

Mr. RICHARD FOSTER.—The remarks of the honorable member who has just resumed his seat have shown additional need for very rigid inquiry into the operations and cost of this railway. I do not know whether the honorable member was attempting to be humorous and satirical when he referred to this line as an example of the success of the day-labour system; but, if it is his opinion, it

is not the opinion of the people of Australia. We ought to have a very rigid inquiry in order to ascertain whether the adoption of the day-labour principle will be justified in the construction of future railways. In passing, I may mention that, when an expenditure of about £2,000,000 had been involved in the building of this railway, Mr. Joseph Timms, a well-known railway contractor, in fact, the largest in Australia, wrote to the then Prime Minister offering to build the line according to the departmental schedules for £2,000,000.

Mr. J. H. CATTS.—The Government would have had to spend another £1,000,000 afterwards, in order to put things right.

Mr. RICHARD FOSTER.—I have no doubt that the Government have spent more than another £1,000,000 already, without the assistance of Mr. Timms. The offer was referred by the Ministry of the day to the Engineer-in-Chief, Mr. Bell, and he recommended that it be not entertained, and that he be allowed to carry out the work departmentally. He reported that no saving would be effected by accepting Mr. Timms' offer.

Mr. POYNTON.—It is equally true that Mr. Timms tendered for a section of the line, and the Government have since constructed it at a saving of £25,000.

Mr. RICHARD FOSTER.—Any one who knows anything about railway work knows that such things are not uncommon. If the Department has not sufficient skill to protect itself, it should not be relied on.

Mr. WATT.—What was the date of Mr. Timms' offer?

Mr. RICHARD FOSTER.—It was submitted on the 9th November, 1914. I am very anxious, in the interest of economical expenditure, and of the country, that the greatest fairness should be extended to any one who has had the carrying out of this work at times when difficulties have been abnormal. On four or five occasions, I have addressed the House on this subject at considerable length, and I have always made allowance for the abnormal conditions that have prevailed in connexion with this work; but I seek to have those abnormal conditions submitted to the most rigid scrutiny, because, if day labour is a success in the



construction of railways, it should continue; but if it is not a success, we should know where it has failed. My honorable friends opposite should be quite satisfied with a reasonable proposition of that nature.

After making his offer, Mr. Timms waited on the Prime Minister of the day, and dealt with some of the objections raised in Mr. Bell's report. The offer submitted by Mr. Timms was not one from a man of no substance. In his first communication to the Government, he informed them that he was prepared to make a deposit of £50,000, and also to allow another £50,000 to be kept back out of the progress payments. In other words, he offered to put up £100,000 as a guarantee of good faith.

Mr. WATT.—Has the honorable member carefully read the offer?

Mr. RICHARD FOSTER.—Yes; and I discussed it with the Government of the day.

Mr. WATT.—Did the offer include rails and sleepers?

Mr. RICHARD FOSTER.—Undoubtedly not. Mr. Bell dealt with that matter. Mr. Bell, in recommending that the offer be turned down, had it in his mind that the line would be built, as he had built many railways in Queensland, by the small contract, or *butty-gang* system.

Mr. WATT.—If the honorable member will make a calculation he will see that the cost of rails and sleepers alone would come to the amount which he has mentioned.

Mr. RICHARD FOSTER.—The honorable Minister has not followed my remarks closely. I said that to the date of the offer the Government were involved in an expenditure of £2,000,000, which included the cost of rails and sleepers.

Mr. WATT.—Very few of them. All the rails and sleepers had not been acquired at that date.

Mr. RICHARD FOSTER.—At any rate, the bulk of the sleepers had been contracted for by that time. I have a statement dealing with the excessive cost of material due to the war, and it shows that 800 miles of rails and 900 miles of sleepers were arranged for, delivered, and paid for a very long time ago.

Mr. WATT.—Not by the end of 1914.

Mr. RICHARD FOSTER.—No; but a big portion of them were. Of

course, we should have all this information on the table of the House. I am trusting largely to memory and to such scraps of information that I have been able to glean in a very little time from *Hansard* over the last four years, so that I am not in a position to offer that definite and detailed criticism that I would very much like to offer, and which should be offered before we proceed very much further with this Bill.

Mr. WATT.—If the honorable member will let me know exactly what information he desires I will endeavour to get it for him.

Mr. RICHARD FOSTER.—Exactly; but I remind the Minister that in his rush of business he has overlooked the fact that five weeks ago I asked him for a return of the operations of the Traffic Department, which Department was instituted when the right honorable member for Parramatta was Minister for Home Affairs, over three years ago. From time to time I have asked for, and obtained, returns of the results of its operations, and five weeks ago I asked the present Minister whether he would see that I had, as soon as possible, the figures brought up to the end of the financial year.

Mr. WATT.—It has not been possible to secure the information yet.

Mr. RICHARD FOSTER.—It was possible to secure it immediately when I asked for it on previous occasions. I admit that it was obtained by telegraph.

Mr. WATT.—It was only approximate. As the work proceeds from the rail head it becomes harder and harder to supply the information speedily. The line is nearly 500 miles out from rail head at each end.

Mr. RICHARD FOSTER.—The trains do not travel the whole distance. The returns have generally come from the western end by the ordinary mail, and from the eastern end by direct rail.

Mr. WATT.—It takes three weeks to do the thing properly, and then there is the loss of time in the transit through the mails. I expect the return to be at hand next week.

Mr. RICHARD FOSTER.—That is not sufficient justification for not having all the facts before this House before we dispose of the Bill. If we realized our responsibilities to the country on this matter of public expenditure we should ask

to have the Bill referred to a Select Committee for examination and report.

Mr. WATT.—The Bill does not relate to the matter with which the honorable member is dealing. He is talking about the construction of the line, and its past history.

Mr. RICHARD FOSTER.—What I am talking about has everything to do with the Bill. The cost of the line is related to the prospective revenue and the question whether the result will be loss or gain.

Mr. TUDOR.—Did not the honorable member want an additional 30 miles of line built from Port Augusta to Quorn, so that the workshops might be built there?

Mr. RICHARD FOSTER.—I secured an inquiry into that matter, and it prevented, at all events for the present, an expenditure of £266,000, for which an expenditure of something under £40,000 has been substituted.

Mr. TUDOR.—It was infinitely better to put the workshops at Port Augusta than at Quorn.

Mr. RICHARD FOSTER.—The honorable member was a member of the Government which approved of the expenditure of £266,000 over a period of two years.

Mr. TUDOR.—On workshops.

Mr. RICHARD FOSTER.—Cabinet did not know anything more than the fact that the money was to be spent on workshops.

Mr. TUDOR.—Where did the honorable member desire the workshops to be built?

Mr. RICHARD FOSTER.—Where experts should decide was the best place.

Mr. POYNTON.—Were the gentlemen who made the examination experts?

Mr. RICHARD FOSTER.—One of the experts was the Assistant Chief Mechanical Engineer of Victoria, who has had infinitely more practical experience than any expert in the employment of the Federal Government to-day has had in that direction.

Mr. WATT.—I am embarrassed; there are so many honorable members who seem to know more about some phases of this question than I do.

Mr. RICHARD FOSTER.—It should embarrass the Minister. I have never seen a more excellent recommendation than that which was given by the present Minister for Works and Railways to the

expert to whom the honorable member for Grey has referred.

Mr. POYNTON.—Yet he said that Port Augusta was the proper place for the workshops.

Mr. RICHARD FOSTER.—While he said that, he also recommended cutting down the £266,000 approved of by the Cabinet of the day to something under £40,000.

Mr. POYNTON.—Yes, for the time being.

Mr. RICHARD FOSTER.—No man in this House knows better than the honorable member for the district that "the time being" will probably be another fifty years.

In introducing this Bill, the Minister made a brief historical reference to the east-west railway. The original estimates of the cost of constructing the line were in the region of £4,000,000. There was one estimate of about £4,000,000, and another of £4,500,000, but, exclusive of rolling-stock—except for a limited supply—the estimate was a little over £4,000,000. That estimate has been sneered at on many occasions since the work was undertaken, but the fact remains that a conference of five State engineers-in-chief—all the States except Tasmania being represented—was responsible for the basis on which it was made. I invite honorable members to examine it in the light of the action of the present Engineer-in-Chief of Commonwealth Railways in turning down Mr. Timms's offer, and to see what opinion he then held as to the probable cost of the railway. These State engineers-in-chief, meeting in conference, determined what would be a fair estimate, having regard to the information at their disposal, and they were certainly not without data for their guidance. The Railway Departments of Western Australia and South Australia were called upon to assist them, and they furnished such data as an intimate experience of the two States through which the railway was to pass could enable them to supply. No more reliable information could have been submitted at that time to the conference.

Mr. RILEY.—Was the information complete?

Mr. RICHARD FOSTER.—It was as complete as it could be at the time. The honorable member will admit that the



engineers-in-chief of Western Australia and South Australia ought to know more about their own States than the engineer-in-chief of New South Wales or Queensland.

Mr. ARCHIBALD.—What instructions did they receive?

Mr. RICHARD FOSTER.—The instructions are set out in the parliamentary papers, which have been available for some years, but unfortunately very few honorable members have looked at them.

Mr. ARCHIBALD.—Life is too short to allow of the reading of big Blue-Books.

Mr. RICHARD FOSTER.—It is not too short to allow of the squandering of money and the building up of huge costly departments. The Minister for Works and Railways has suggested that some honorable members appear to know a great deal more about these matters than he does. I am not responsible for that. The honorable gentleman will concede, however, that I ought to know more about local conditions and what is going on in South Australia than a Victorian or New South Welshman.

Mr. WATT.—Hear, hear!

Mr. RICHARD FOSTER.—Public feeling on this question has been so strong in South Australia for the last four years that the work is now looked upon almost with ridicule. The reason is that South Australians have come into almost daily contact with the men working on the line and know what has been going on during all these years.

Mr. LAIRD SMITH.—How does the honorable member reconcile this speech with that which he made on the occasion of the turning of the first sod?

Mr. RICHARD FOSTER.—At that time I advocated the construction of a line to cost £4,000,000. I have been doing my best ever since to bring the several Governments of the Commonwealth, and also the Parliament, to a sense of their duty. I have urged them to order an investigation to determine whether this Parliament is justified in constructing this line at a cost 60 per cent. in excess of the original estimate.

Mr. POYNTON.—This line, when finished, will cost little more than the Oodnadatta narrow-gauge line cost.

Mr. RICHARD FOSTER.—The honorable member is talking without his book. If he were to consult the officers of the

South Australian Railway Department he would not repeat that statement. In any event, the Oodnadatta railway, although it is a narrow-gauge line, ought to have cost more, since it passes through a lot of difficult country. It goes through Pichi Richi Pass, Hookina Pass, and other difficult stretches of country, whereas the east-west railway, practically from beginning to end, passes through flat country. The Minister himself told us that the east-west line has a longer straight run than any other railway.

Mr. WATT.—In making this comparison, is it not fair to write on the other side the fact that when the Oodnadatta line was constructed the cost of labour was probably less than half what it is to-day, and that material was also much cheaper?

Mr. RICHARD FOSTER.—Provision was made accordingly, and I did not introduce the comparison.

Mr. WATT.—A still further fact is that had the estimated cost of £4,000,000 been correct, this line would have been constructed for less than the Oodnadatta line.

Mr. RICHARD FOSTER.—It ought to be constructed for less, seeing that there are no engineering difficulties. The further we proceed with this discussion the more evident it becomes that the Bill should be referred to a Select Committee.

Mr. WATT.—But this Bill has nothing whatever to do with the matters to which the honorable member has just been referring.

Mr. RICHARD FOSTER.—It has everything to do with them. A Commonwealth Railway Department ought not to be created, at all events, during the war.

Mr. WATT.—There is a Commonwealth Railway Department already in existence.

Mr. RICHARD FOSTER.—Arrangements ought to be made with the Railway Departments of South Australia and Western Australia to manage these railways for the time being.

Mr. WATT.—Oh!

Mr. RICHARD FOSTER.—I thought that suggestion would not be received with approval. It is the old, old story of Commonwealth Ministers glorifying in building up Departments. The metropolitan press of the several States is just beginning to deal with this question, which it should have taken up long ago.

Mr. WATT.—The Commonwealth Railway Department has been in existence for many years, and, as a matter of fact, this Bill will reduce the cost of administration.

Mr. RICHARD FOSTER.—After the Minister has had four or five years' experience of what he is now proposing, he will wish that he had never made the speech that he did in introducing the Bill.

Mr. WATT.—It is very easy to indulge in prophecy, but I have had more experience of railway administration—more experience by many years—than the honorable member has had.

Mr. RICHARD FOSTER.—I have had a good many years official experience of railway administration, but I have never heard such a statement as that which the honorable gentleman submitted to the House in moving the second reading of the Bill. In dealing with Yass-Canberra, he became poetic. It was, after all, poor poetry, and there is poor scope for poetry in the east-west railway.

Mr. RILEY.—He had a dream there.

Mr. RICHARD FOSTER.—Yass-Canberra is not a dream to be trifled with.

Mr. BAMFORD.—It is a nightmare.

Mr. RICHARD FOSTER.—It is to the people of Australia. The Minister who would, it seems, reflect on my knowledge of railway administration, told the House that the east-west railway went through 1,050 miles of country in which there was not a human habitation.

Mr. WATT.—I said 1,000 miles.

Mr. RICHARD FOSTER.—The greater part of that 1,000 miles of country has been occupied between forty and fifty years.

Mr. WATT.—Where are the houses?

Mr. RICHARD FOSTER.—I saw some of them through the railway carriage windows when I was travelling with the Minister.

Mr. WATT.—The honorable member saw the first at Wilgena.

Mr. RICHARD FOSTER.—I saw them at Wilgena and, before that, I saw houses at Tarcoola.

Mr. HETTMANN.—Tarcoola is not fifty years old.

Mr. RICHARD FOSTER.—The honorable member is referring to the gold-field itself, whereas I am speaking of pastoral occupation. I have been in the north of South Australia for thirty-seven years, and some of the

stations in the country to which we are referring were well established when I arrived. Then again, the Minister spoke of the provision of water by boring, and the impression he gave was that boring operations had been fairly successful. He was asked as to the quality of the water, and said, I think, that it was excellent. So far as I know there is not a successful bore along the line, except at Kingoonya.

Mr. WATT.—The honorable member has been over the western end of the line and has tasted the water.

Mr. RICHARD FOSTER.—The honorable member for Dampier has, and he has told me of it.

Mr. WATT.—It is a matter of palate.

Mr. RICHARD FOSTER.—Is it not a fact that the railway officials say that they have now to rely on the Kingoonya water supply, as well as on the immense condensing tanks, and the supply at Mundarring provided at great cost. Reservoirs are also being constructed for the storage of water from catchment areas which are not all of the very best. These reservoirs, however, are essential, but costly, because of the indifferent rainfall.

The engineers who made the original estimate of the cost of the line provided as much for water as this Government has spent in obtaining it. They estimated the cost of getting supplies of water at between £300,000 and £400,000, and spoke of the difficulty of getting water as the supreme difficulty connected with the construction of the line. I forgot to mention that the water at Depot Creek promises to be very satisfactory. That supply has been known of ever since that part of the country was settled. But the supplies referred to by the Minister yesterday are practically useless for the operating of the line.

Sir JOHN FORREST.—Not useless!

Mr. RICHARD FOSTER.—Those on the South Australian side are absolutely useless, because there is not a sufficient quantity of water.

Mr. WATT.—What about those on the Western Australian side?

Mr. RICHARD FOSTER.—Regarding them I speak on the authority of the honorable member for Dampier.

Mr. WATT.—Has he been along the line?

Mr. RICHARD FOSTER.—I do not know, but for about nine years he was



Minister for Mines in Western Australia, and should know something of the subject.

Sir JOHN FORREST. — The honorable member has always been aware that there is no surface water in the country.

Mr. RICHARD FOSTER.—I am not complaining of that. What I say is that the information with which we have been supplied by the Minister is unsatisfactory.

Mr. BAMFORD.—Wait until Mr. Balsillie gets to work.

Mr. RICHARD FOSTER.—The Minister claims that Mr. Balsillie has increased the rainfall from 50 to 60 per cent., but the public of Western Australia and South Australia regard him as bally silly for saying that.

Mr. WATT.—When the honorable member has finished his speech we shall hear what other South Australians have to say regarding it.

Mr. RICHARD FOSTER.—It is not likely that it will be criticised by other South Australians. I know the opinion of both the Commonwealth and the State representatives of South Australia regarding this line. State members have told me that I have never exaggerated the facts on the occasions on which I have tried to get this House to take control of the matter.

Sir JOHN FORREST. — The honorable member has said that the work has cost too much, that is all.

Mr. RICHARD FOSTER.—I wish to know the reason why it has cost too much. For many years I regarded this Parliament as criminally negligent of control concerning public expenditure, and that was the opinion of the Minister for Railways also, judging by some of the eloquent speeches he made before he entered this Parliament. But I thought that when the Public Works Committee and the Public Accounts Committee were appointed, Parliament would have information regarding public expenditure which would enable honorable members to give effect to their individual responsibility in these matters. The construction of this railway for an expenditure of £4,000,000 was what Parliament sanctioned, but, according to the Minister's statement, the amount expended has already exceeded by over 60 per cent. the amount of the estimate, and all the accounts are not yet in. The proposal cannot be referred to the Public Works Committee, notwithstanding

that some of the departures from the original scheme had cost scores, if not hundreds of thousands of pounds. Still I am glad to know, on the authority of the Prime Minister, that the matter is to be referred to the Public Accounts Committee.

Mr. WATT.—That was not promised.

Mr. RICHARD FOSTER.—If that be so, I wish to know in what light the people are to regard the statement made yesterday by the Minister.

Mr. WATT. — The Public Accounts Committee, when appointed, will be entitled to investigate this matter at any time without waiting for a reference.

Mr. RICHARD FOSTER. — The Prime Minister promised that the matter should be referred to the Committee, and said that he would provide an engineering expert to act in an advisory capacity for the Committee.

Mr. JOSEPH COOK. — The honorable member must admit that the cost of labour alone has increased by 60 per cent. since the work was sanctioned.

Mr. RICHARD FOSTER. — I have many times admitted that both labour and materials have increased in cost. Making every allowance for that, I say that the management has not been what it should be. If the management had been good, why should the Department object to a proper inquiry?

Mr. WATT.—The Department offers no objection to an inquiry, but my concern now is to get the line opened.

Mr. RICHARD FOSTER. — If the Minister knew as much about the line as do the people of the States through which it runs, he would not be so much concerned about getting it opened.

Sir JOHN FORREST.—I desire to see it opened as soon as possible.

Mr. RICHARD FOSTER.—With the Treasurer all roads lead to Western Australia, and he should be remembered in that State for a century for the way in which he has battled for its interests. I do not object to the railway being opened as soon as it is finished, and we are told that it will be finished at the end of September. It would be possible to run the line without creating the proposed Department, and thus increasing the administrative costs.

Mr. WATT. — The honorable member would farm the line out to the States concerned!

Mr. RICHARD FOSTER.—Yes, and the Treasurer agrees with me that that should be done.

Sir JOHN FORREST.—I thought that it might be a little more economical, but the Minister assures me that it would be more expensive. He bases his opinion on our experience in connexion with the Oodnadatta railway.

Mr. RICHARD FOSTER.—When the Commonwealth takes over the running of the Oodnadatta line, the expenditure there will increase by 50 per cent. within six months. There could not be anything more extravagant than the management of the East-West railway by the Commonwealth. For the last three or four years there has been a traffic Department for that line. There is an Acting Commissioner, a Director of Transport and a Chief Mechanical Engineer. When the Minister for the Navy was Prime Minister I appealed to him not to create a traffic Department, because that would lead to enormous expenditure, and because such a thing was almost unknown in connexion with initial railway construction. I said that there should be one supreme authority for the construction of the line, without division of interests.

Mr. JOSEPH COOK.—The Department was in existence long before I took office.

Mr. RICHARD FOSTER.—It was created when the honorable member was Prime Minister. He submitted to me a report consisting of several sheets of foolscap, which had been supplied to him by the Transport Officer. That report made out that it would be profitable to create the proposed Department, and the Government of the day gave effect to the recommendation.

Mr. WATT.—Why did not the honorable gentleman impose a limitation on expenditure in 1911, when the construction of the railway was sanctioned?

Mr. RICHARD FOSTER.—For sixteen or seventeen years I was a member of a Parliament by whom officials whose expenditure largely exceeded their estimates were brought to book, and dismissed if it continued, and I thought that the same treatment would be given to Commonwealth officials.

Mr. JOSEPH COOK.—The fact that the honorable member was supplied with a report by the Director of Transport is evidence that the Department was in existence at the time.

Mr. RICHARD FOSTER.—The report was by the officer who was Director of Transport for constructional supplies. I understand that shortly afterwards his salary was increased by £200.

Mr. JOSEPH COOK.—The new Engineer-in-Chief, on reviewing his work, recommended that he should get £200 a year more.

Mr. RICHARD FOSTER.—I wish to show how amply my warnings have been verified. I have obtained four or five returns showing the operations of this Department, and I hope that the Minister for Railways will at the first opportunity get a complete return. The latest return in my possession deals with the revenue and expenditure for the six months ended on the 31st January last. During that period the revenue from all sources from the public to this Traffic Department, which has been in existence three or four years, was £5,335 12s. 3d. The revenue from the Department, which the Treasurer, almost innocently, in his love for Western Australia, if I had not interjected, would have returned as the revenue from the railway—

Sir JOHN FORREST.—What is that?

Mr. RICHARD FOSTER.—I am referring to the bookkeeping business, and to the last Supply Bill.

Sir JOHN FORREST.—I never insinuated that.

Mr. RICHARD FOSTER.—The revenue from the Department for the hauling of material and so forth was £69,845 12s. 7d., and to earn the two sums the cost was £137,484 10s. 1d.

Mr. WATT.—Will the honorable member say how he gets the last figure?

Mr. RICHARD FOSTER.—I got it from the Department. When I asked for the returns I asked for them to be made out separately, showing the revenue from the public and from the Department.

Mr. WATT.—I think that a conference with the expert officers would convince the honorable member that his figures are wrong, used as he is using them.

Mr. RICHARD FOSTER.—I am simply giving the figures as they were presented by the Department to Parliament. These returns have been going on for two or three years, and the Department has not contradicted any of them; indeed, they cannot be contradicted.

Sir JOHN FORREST.—What do you wish to prove?



Mr. RICHARD FOSTER.—I wish to prove a principle that the Treasurer would apply rigidly to some of the Departments, as I hope he will apply it to all. I wish to prove that there ought to have been some regard paid to the cost of construction in its relation to the anticipated revenue?

Sir JOHN FORREST.—There are 650 miles of the railway in the honorable member's own territory, out of 1,000 miles.

Mr. RICHARD FOSTER.—That argument may appeal to the honorable member for Swan, but it does not in any way appeal to me.

Sir JOHN FORREST.—You suck the orange, and now you do not care for oranges.

Mr. RICHARD FOSTER.—While the revenue from the public covers passenger fares as well as freight, I do not suppose that very much is represented by fares, because the passengers are all Government servants who go free on board. This traffic will, I suppose, come into the book-keeping business.

Mr. JOSEPH COOK.—The honorable member will agree that when the line was authorized it was quite well known that the revenue would not anything like meet the outlay.

Mr. RICHARD FOSTER.—Everybody did know that—particularly everybody in Western Australia and South Australia.

Sir JOHN FORREST.—And they have made a fortune out of it in the meantime.

Mr. RICHARD FOSTER.—Your people have.

Sir JOHN FORREST.—No, your people, who had 650 miles of railway built in their country for nothing.

Mr. RICHARD FOSTER.—It must be remembered that we did not ask for it. A Traffic Department, which has been operating for two or three years, ought to have been in a position to give some reliable estimate of what the revenue is likely to be. The Minister gave it to us in a lump sum.

Mr. WATT.—We cannot deal with two cock-spur lines approaching one another as we can with a trunk line. Who can predict what the traffic will be east and west?

Mr. RICHARD FOSTER.—The Minister has told us how much the revenue

will be, but what I complain of is that he has not told us how he arrives at his conclusion. I asked the Minister, when he was speaking, if he would be good enough to give the House the details of the amount stated by him—the details supplied by his responsible officers—and he said he would.

Sir JOHN FORREST.—Details of what?

Mr. RICHARD FOSTER.—Of the revenue—as to how much would come from cattle traffic, goods traffic, and so forth.

Sir JOHN FORREST.—It would only be a guess, anyhow.

Mr. RICHARD FOSTER.—When the first estimates were made I was at the Railway Department in South Australia, and the Railway Commissioner of that State, and also the Railway Commissioner of Western Australia, gave estimates of the revenue.

Sir JOHN FORREST.—They did.

Mr. RICHARD FOSTER.—Is it the practice by any Government in Australia to bring in a Railway Bill without such a statement? We have a Commissioner —

Mr. WATT.—No!

Mr. RICHARD FOSTER.—We have had an Acting Commissioner for two or three years.

Sir JOHN FORREST.—What is the good of this criticism now?

Mr. RICHARD FOSTER.—It is my imperative and conscientious duty to offer such criticism, because it is a duty altogether neglected by the House.

Sir JOHN FORREST.—You have had all the benefit, and now you find fault!

Mr. RICHARD FOSTER.—I desire the truth to be told; and the honorable member for Swan cannot answer me on these points.

Sir JOHN FORREST.—I can.

Mr. RICHARD FOSTER.—You can, but you would not like to see the answers in print.

Sir JOHN FORREST.—What is that? What is it I will not answer?

Mr. RICHARD FOSTER.—I invite the honorable member to put in print his interjections in the House this morning.

Sir JOHN FORREST.—They can all go into print so far as I am concerned.

Mr. RICHARD FOSTER.—They would not read very well in the morning's newspapers!

Sir JOHN FORREST.—They would show I am acting a proper part.

Mr. RICHARD FOSTER.—There is no reason on earth why the Department should not give this House a report in detail as to the traffic; in fact they knew the particulars, and they know the revenue has melted down from the previous extravagant estimate to about £12,000 or £14,000 a year at the outside for freights.

Sir JOHN FORREST.—What do you wish to prove?

Mr. RICHARD FOSTER.—I wish to prove that the railway has cost so much, and that the expenditure has been incurred with an entire disregard to its relation to the anticipated revenue. I wish to prove that because of the absence of proper control by this House of public expenditure, we have now got what is really a "white elephant," which will be a burden on the people for all time.

Sir JOHN FORREST.—You mean another "white elephant"?

Mr. RICHARD FOSTER.—Another "white elephant," if you like to put it that way. The Minister has made a statement as to what the annual interest charge will be. The original estimate of the cost was £4,000,000, and the interest, calculated at  $3\frac{1}{2}$  per cent. for twelve months, is within only a few pounds more or less of the interest stated by the present Minister on a cost of nearly £7,000,000.

Mr. WATT.—That is not correct. Your statement about the interest is not correct.

Mr. RICHARD FOSTER.—Here is another reason why we should have official information. We have to discuss this important problem on the most meagre facts—on scraps in the daily press—and then we are confronted with the statement that what is said is not correct.

Mr. WATT.—I assume a knowledge of elementary arithmetic on the part of honorable members.

Mr. RICHARD FOSTER.—The honorable member has assumed and said much that is absolutely contrary to fact, and the honorable member knows very well he cannot substantiate it.

Sir JOHN FORREST.—What good can the honorable member do by what he is now saying? Is it his desire to give a new Minister injunctions for the future?

Mr. RICHARD FOSTER.—I do not wish to give any injunctions; I am simply doing my duty as a member of the House.

If I did not take my present course I should not be doing my duty.

Sir JOHN FORREST.—You cannot undo what is done.

Mr. RICHARD FOSTER.—But I do not desire to see the same done over again. I hope that the Minister for Railways does not think I am adopting an unfriendly attitude.

Mr. WATT.—No; but the Bill will stop a recurrence of the complaints you are making.

Mr. RICHARD FOSTER.—I think the Minister said, in introducing the Bill, that the interest for a year would be £157,724.

Mr. WATT.—No; that is the total loss for nine months.

Mr. RICHARD FOSTER.—I am not dealing with the matter of loss.

Mr. WATT.—That is the figure I gave as the loss for nine months.

Mr. RICHARD FOSTER.—In the newspaper report of the honorable gentleman's speech he is alleged to have said that the cost of the railway was to be £6,667,360, and that the interest for twelve months would be £157,724.

Mr. WATT.—The honorable member has his figures wrong.

Mr. RICHARD FOSTER.—What will the interest be?

Mr. WATT.—By leave of the House, I could give the figures now.

Mr. SPEAKER.—If the honorable member for Wakefield resumes his seat he will forfeit his right to speak again.

Mr. WATT.—For the nine months I gave the working expenses as £168,613, and the revenue as £159,694, including construction revenue. The loss on the working expenses, therefore, for the nine months is £8,819. If you add the nine months' interest, which is £148,805, you have a loss of £157,724; and then, if you go further and make a calculation for the twelve months you have to add a fourth, which makes the loss £210,299.

Mr. RICHARD FOSTER.—That means that my figure of £157,724 is subject to a deduction of £8,000 odd.

Mr. WATT.—That is the loss for nine months. If you wish to know the interest for the year it comes to £198,000, which the Treasury supplies as the debit.

Mr. RICHARD FOSTER.—The interest, as supplied by the Engineer-in-Chief on an outlay of £4,000,000 was £159,566 at  $3\frac{1}{2}$  per cent. That was on



a capital cost 60 per cent. less than that now involved.

Mr. WATT.—The Treasury was asked to debit us with the interest, and I give the figures supplied.

Mr. RICHARD FOSTER.—A portion of the capital cost has come out of revenue, another portion out of the Note Fund, and a third out of loan moneys; and the House is entitled to know the exact figures in relation to each. I contend that all public undertakings of this character should be paid for out of loan money.

Mr. WATT.—Hear, hear!

Mr. MANIFOLD.—It is all treated as loan moneys.

Mr. RICHARD FOSTER.—It is treated as revenue and thus we add to the taxation burdens of the community.

Mr. WATT.—Whatever the source of the capital, I propose to treat it as interest-bearing capital.

Mr. RICHARD FOSTER.—And have I the assurance of the Minister that this money, irrespective of whether it came from revenue, from the Notes Fund, or from loan, will all be debited against capital cost?

Mr. WATT.—That is my intention.

Mr. RICHARD FOSTER.—Then I do not think the Minister's figures are correct on that basis.

Mr. WATT.—We are not debiting the whole £6,000,000 for the nine months, because the whole amount will not have been spent. But the whole capital cost ought to carry interest at whatever rate the Treasury considers fair.

Mr. JOSEPH COOK.—We shall have to do with this railway as was done with the Oodnadatta line.

Mr. RICHARD FOSTER.—If the Government do no worse than was done with the Oodnadatta line, I will compliment them for a month on end.

Mr. JOSEPH COOK.—I do not see that we could do much worse.

Mr. RICHARD FOSTER.—They have been doing worse all along. However, an inquiry into the accounts will settle that. I have not the slightest feeling against anybody connected with this railway.

Mr. JOSEPH COOK.—The honorable member is only wasting his breath if he imagines that this is an immediately pay-

ing proposition. It cannot be, and never was intended to be so.

Mr. RICHARD FOSTER.—The honorable member's statement is a reflection on his own intelligence. Any man who would assume that this was an immediate paying proposition ought not to be outside a lunatic asylum. For that reason, and because the loss is ever increasing, I wish to see a limitation of the cost.

Mr. WATT.—You are locking the stable door too late; the horse has been gone for months.

Mr. RICHARD FOSTER.—I have been hammering away at this matter for years.

Mr. WATT.—You should have started in 1911. This is a death-bed repentance on your part.

Mr. RICHARD FOSTER.—It is nothing of the kind. I have been speaking to an empty House for years. If the House had listened to me, and insisted on a business conduct of the undertaking, as soon as the prices for material rose on account of the war, the construction would have been stopped.

Mr. TUDOR.—I think the fault lies with the honorable member for Wentworth. He was the first Minister in charge of the railway.

Mr. RICHARD FOSTER.—What was a justifiable proposition on the basis of the recommendations of the Engineers-in-Chief of Australia, at a cost of about £4,000,000, is not a justifiable proposition on its present cost. There is not an honorable member who will say that, had the present cost of the line been suggested when the Bill authorizing the construction of the line was before Parliament, the project would have been agreed to.

Mr. KELLY.—That is a fair way of looking at it.

Mr. RICHARD FOSTER.—And if we had had proper statements as to how these excesses were occurring, the construction would have been stopped long ago.

Mr. KELLY.—Do you not think it was farcical to commence the construction of the line before Western Australia had built the broad gauge from Perth to Kalgoorlie?

Mr. RICHARD FOSTER.—Yes; and that is another evidence that the people in Western Australia and South Australia

do not think they have any great prize coming to them through the completion of this line. Western Australia has not carried out an honorable understanding in regard to the Perth-Kalgoorlie section; but it must be remembered that that State has been in straitened circumstances, and the Government had to choose between the development of its agricultural lands or the sinking of £2,000,000 in broadening the gauge from Perth to Kalgoorlie, from which expenditure they could expect no commensurate return.

Mr. KELLY.—But it is not right for Western Australia to charge the Commonwealth full rates for goods carried over the Perth-Kalgoorlie line.

Mr. RICHARD FOSTER.—No. That brings me to a suggestion that has been made that a proportion of the earnings on the transcontinental line between Kalgoorlie and Port Augusta should go to the Western Australian Government.

*Extension of time granted.*

Mr. WATT.—The Western Australian Railway Department is now asking for some proportion of the fares earned on other sections of the line. I think that is an immoral suggestion.

Mr. RICHARD FOSTER.—I am glad to hear the Minister say that. Reference has been made by interjection to the proposal that the Commonwealth should take over the Oodnadatta line.

Mr. WATT.—That has been suggested, but, of course, the passing of this Bill is immaterial to that. We have the power to do that without this Bill.

Mr. RICHARD FOSTER.—Yes, the taking over of the line can be the subject of an agreement. An agreement was made with the ex-Minister of Home Affairs for a period of two years.

Mr. WATT.—That is so, but I do not propose to do anything until I can, with the honorable members interested, inspect the proposition.

Mr. KELLY.—Ought not the House to have an opportunity of investigating the matter?

Mr. RICHARD FOSTER.—I should be delighted if such an opportunity were given, because I should be able to point out to honorable members that this proposal is even more ridiculous in war-time than is the east-west railway. The northern railway is really a cattle traffic line.

Mr. KELLY.—It is worked extensively for only a few weeks in the year.

Mr. RICHARD FOSTER.—There are three trains a week to Hergott Springs, and there is a fortnightly train to Oodnadatta. During four or five months of the year there are several special cattle trains run every week-end, some of them from Farina, and most of them go to Hergott Springs, or William Creek, or Oodnadatta. Whilst the passenger receipts on that line are limited, there is very considerable traffic which is done in four or five months of the year. Its volume depends on the season.

Mr. FALKINER.—Without that railway the country would not be occupied at all.

Mr. RICHARD FOSTER.—That is so. I intend to get from the South Australian Railway Department figures which will represent the Oodnadatta railway in its proper light.

Mr. ARCHIBALD.—If it were extended there would be a bigger cattle traffic.

Mr. RICHARD FOSTER.—The cattle traffic is growing, and will continue to do so, but it can be handled only by co-operation between the two Governments. For instance, South Australia, with a fully developed Railway Department and a big supply of rolling-stock, can handle the northern cattle business only by withdrawing rolling-stock and men from another system, probably from the Broken Hill system.

Mr. WATT.—The two systems should operate together.

Mr. KELLY.—It is the one 3-ft. 6-in. system.

Mr. RICHARD FOSTER.—While the northern cattle trade is being handled, the whole of the 3-ft. 6-in. gauge vehicles are concentrated on that traffic, and the enginemmen and staff have to be drawn from the Broken Hill system. If the Commonwealth had to operate that line independently, a great portion of the equipment and staff would be idle for six months in the year.

Mr. WATT.—That would not be proposed by any sensible administration. Even if we took over the line we should have to arrange for an interchange of rolling-stock. There are many difficulties, however, in the present situation. Our hiring charges are very great, and repairs and supervision are too costly.

Mr. RICHARD FOSTER.—I should agree with the honorable member if he



said his proposal would be infinitely worse. There will be worse difficulty if this line is taken over and operated by the Commonwealth. If a Commonwealth Railway Department had any prospect of development on paying lines, I should be the last to urge anything against the creation of the Department at once; but so far as we can see, having regard to existing financial conditions, which are not likely to improve for some time, there can be no development in connexion with railways.

Mr. WATT.—I cannot understand the honorable member's constantly recurring phrase about the creation of a Department. This Department has been created for many years, and the Bill will effect economy and give better administration.

Mr. RICHARD FOSTER.—I say that it will not. South Australian and Western Australian railway men, and the Governments of those States, express the same opinion, and they ought to understand the local conditions.

Mr. WATT.—Both Governments desire to feed on this line as they have been doing. They have sucked a good deal of juice out of it, and they wish to continue to do that.

Mr. KELLY.—We must have a Bill to authorize the operation of the line. What does the honorable member suggest in lieu of this proposal?

Mr. RICHARD FOSTER.—I suggest that until the war is over, the Commonwealth should ask the two State Governments to run this railway in their own territories. It could be run by them conjointly, like the Melbourne to Adelaide and Melbourne to Sydney lines.

Mr. WATT. — We cannot divide this baby into two, and let it out to two wet-nurses.

Mr. RICHARD FOSTER.—The honorable member is not to be envied in pre- siding over the Commonwealth railways, because they will be the poorest railway system on earth, and will not be a good advertisement for this country.

*Sitting suspended from 1 to 2.15 p.m.*

Mr. RICHARD FOSTER.—I wish to urge upon honorable members the advisability of the Commonwealth arranging that the States of South Australia and Western Australia jointly should run the east-west railway, at all events until after the war. They already have their administrative staffs, and could quite easily include the administration of the

sections of the east-west line which run through their territories without much extra overhead cost. I urge upon the Minister the question of the removal of the management of the Commonwealth railways from political control. We know that in connexion with railway administration there has been a gradual development of anything but independent control.

Mr. SAMPSON.—Sometimes the railway control becomes too independent, and loses sight of public interests.

Mr. RICHARD FOSTER.—The honorable member for Cook began his speech by urging that railway employees should have the right to go to the Arbitration Court in respect to their wages and conditions of labour. Whoever controls the wages of a big business concern very largely controls the conduct of that business.

Mr. RILEY.—But it is the policy of the Commonwealth!

Mr. RICHARD FOSTER. — I am aware that it is, but it is a rather unfortunate policy that in common with other departures the Liberal party strenuously resisted.

Mr. WATT.—The Commonwealth Parliament has never asserted that system for railways.

Mr. RICHARD FOSTER. — When I speak of the Liberal party I speak of its attitude prior to the coalition. Under the control of former Governments, assented to by the previously combined parties, there have been departures in the conduct of business which have been forced by a block vote of certain members who now sit in opposition; but the Liberal party never did approve of this policy, and I hope that in the interests of the country, and of the workers themselves, there will be some adjustment, so that we can get down to bedrock once again in the matter of ordinary well-established business principles. About eighteen months ago the Commonwealth Government gave the South Australian Government notice of their intention to take over the Oodnadatta line, and in order that they might be ready to assume the running control of that railway they began to make arrangements so far as a staff was concerned. Instead of there being independence of control a meeting was convened at Port Augusta, and the responsible officers of the Department and fifteen unions

were represented at it, and it went into details as to what the rates of pay and the conditions of service and so on should be. It was all quite foreign to the spirit of a Railway Commissioner's authority and to sane business principles. I am not going into details in regard to this matter. I am speaking merely from a report which, I understand, was furnished to the representative of the Port Augusta newspaper. However, the meeting established conditions differing very materially and vitally from those in the South Australian railway system controlled by a Commissioner of Railways.

Mr. WATT. — The procedure adopted for the settlement of wages conditions was quite wrong.

Mr. RICHARD FOSTER. — I am glad to hear the Minister say that. I expected him to say it. Not only were the rates of pay and the conditions of labour very dissimilar, but the classification drawn up was wrong. The Federal authorities anticipated that a considerable section of the South Australian railway employees engaged in running the traffic on the transcontinental line would transfer to the Commonwealth Service. The permanent men in the service of the South Australian Government have the right to elect whether they will continue with the South Australian Government or transfer to the Commonwealth Service. The regulations of the South Australian Service give the engine-drivers and firemen a certain status and rate of pay, according to length of service. The meeting at Port Augusta proposed to group these men, in common with others on the east-west railway, in sections, and classify them in sections in the matter of seniority and pay, and as this meant that first-class railway men in the South Australian service would have to submit to a status which put them alongside men of the third or the fourth grade they elected not to transfer to the Commonwealth service, although the pay was higher. I have no desire to elaborate this point. I simply mention it so that the Minister may take it into consideration. There are many other points to which I would like to refer, but I do not wish to say anything further at the present time. I hope earnestly that the Minister will go most thoroughly into the whole matter. In Committee, as he has suggested, he may be in a position to make some statements that may alter my view-point; but if

I have been incorrect it is not my fault, because I have been compelled to discuss the question on what information I possess. If I have dealt with extraneous matters, or what might be considered extraneous matters, it is because they really affect the issue, seeing that they affect the capital cost of the line.

Mr. FENTON (Maribyrnong) [2.26]. — The House has been very interested in the remarks of the honorable member for Wakefield, but it is very late in the day for an honorable member representing a South Australian constituency to come forward and remonstrate with Parliament for indulging in such a large expenditure on the construction of a line linking the east with the west. There are many honorable members who have a lively recollection of the taking over of the Northern Territory and the line from Port Augusta to Oodnadatta. The representatives of South Australia did not take exception to that step, yet it loaded us with a much greater responsibility than will ever be put upon us by the construction of the east-west railway. There was a tone of disappointment in the speech of the honorable member for Wakefield that the Minister in trying to give some explanation of the expenditure of £6,600,000 on the construction of the Kalgoorlie to Port Augusta railway did not "lay out" right and left against the day-labour system by which it has been built. In my opinion the Minister gave very ample reasons for the line having cost so much more than it was originally estimated to cost, namely, about £4,000,000. When the line has been completed it will be very different from that which was forecasted by those who gave us the estimate of £4,000,000. The very fact that the line has been under construction for more than two and a half years of the great world war has made considerable difference in the cost.

Mr. RILEY. — There are no law costs as to disputes about extras.

Mr. FENTON. — In discussing the second reading of the Bill one does not wish to deal with that particular point; but I remember some exceptionally lively debates in the House in regard to one contract, as a result of which I do not think any one would ask that the railways should be built under the contract system.

Mr. BAMFORD. — That has never been suggested.



Mr. FENTON.—I do not know. If the honorable member for Wakefield had his way every yard of the track would have been constructed under the contract system.

Mr. BAMFORD.—The butt-gang system was the system suggested.

Mr. FENTON.—The honorable member attacked the day-labour system, and he gave himself away when he said that one gentleman had made a very liberal offer, and that from the financial standpoint that gentleman showed that he was not moneyless, seeing that he was prepared to put up £100,000 as a guarantee of his financial stability, while in the next breath he said that this gentleman was one of the most successful contractors in Australia. His statement proved that the man had made very large profits out of his contracts.

Mr. CORSER.—It proved the contractor's ability.

Mr. FENTON.—I am not blaming contractors; I am only blaming the system. The statement shows that the gentleman in question must have made large sums as a railway contractor; that after paying for labour, and providing for plant, and all other costs, there remained, in the case of these contracts, a big margin of profit, which, instead of going into the pockets of the individual, should have passed into the coffers of the State had the work been done by day labour. The Minister has given many good reasons why this line has cost more than was originally estimated.

Mr. FALKNER.—The honorable member wishes to give to day labour the reward of efficiency for "going slow."

Mr. FENTON.—I am prepared to reward efficiency wherever I find it.

Mr. FALKNER.—Then why object to it on the part of a contractor?

Mr. FENTON.—I do not; but I object to large profits going to a contractor when, under another system, the State would enjoy them.

Mr. CORSER.—But the honorable member would make use of the contractor's brains—he would rob him of the reward of his brains.

Mr. FENTON.—Not at all. Contractors—I am not now referring only to railway contractors—are among the

wealthiest men in Australia. In the construction of railways over country in Victoria very similar to that through which the east-west line passes—I refer to the Mallee—the butt-gang system has proved most successful. Reports by Mr. Kernot and other engineers all show that in respect of those lines the butt-gang system has won every time as against the contract system. In some cases, by the adoption of the butt-gang system, Victoria has saved up to £1,000 per mile.

Mr. FALKNER.—Has the honorable member ever heard of a Government engineer being sacked for incompetency, no matter how serious his mistakes?

Mr. FENTON.—Where an engineer or any other officer of a Department has been shown to be incompetent, the Minister in charge of that Department must himself be incompetent if he allows him to remain in the Service.

The honorable member for Wakefield seemed to have some fears regarding the establishment of a Commonwealth Railway Department. I do not think that our experience of either the South Australian or Western Australian Railway Departments has been such as to induce us to leave to them the management of the east-west line. Although we may have to call a halt in railway construction during the war, Australia has yet great railway undertakings ahead of it. A very big railway scheme must be part and parcel of any effective plan for the defence of the Commonwealth.

Mr. BAMFORD.—Our experience of allowing some of the States to do work for us has not been very satisfactory.

Mr. FENTON.—Quite so, and while I am opposed to the creation of any Department that is not absolutely necessary, I think that this House, and a Minister sitting in this House, should have control of the railways of the Commonwealth.

I regret that the Parliament decided to construct the east-west railway on a 4-ft. 8½-in. gauge. I prefer the 5-ft. 3-in. gauge, and had it been adopted we should have been in a much happier position than we are to-day in regard to this line.

Mr. SAMPSON.—It was the biggest blunder ever made by this Parliament.

Mr. FENTON.—Undoubtedly. We practically decided what should be for all

time the standard railway gauge for Australia. Experience in America and elsewhere proves that a wider gauge is preferable.

Mr. FOWLER.—There is a limit.

Mr. FENTON.—Mr. Harriman, one of the greatest railway managers that the world has ever known, said, shortly before his death, that if he had to start again upon the work of constructing the railways of the United States of America he would commence with a 5-ft. 6-in. gauge, and go up to a 7-ft. 3-in. gauge.

Mr. CORSER.—We should be a long while opening up the country if we adopted that idea.

Mr. FENTON.—Certain lines might well be built on a narrow gauge, but we are dealing now with main trunk lines. It has been proved that a broad-gauge line is the best for the rapid transit of troops. According to a most careful computation, although there is a difference of only 6½ inches between the 4-ft. 8½-in. gauge and 5-ft. 3-in. gauge, it is possible every time to draw a 10 per cent. heavier load on the wider-gauge line. Spread that percentage over your thousand miles of railway, apply it to a given number of years, and you will find that the difference is most substantial.

Mr. CORSER.—The wider gauge means additional cost for tunnelling, and so forth.

Mr. FENTON.—There are no tunnels on the east-west railway. In setting about the construction of the line we were afforded a unique opportunity to determine what should be the uniform gauge for Australia.

Mr. MAHONY.—Would the honorable member alter the gauge of this line?

Mr. FENTON.—It is too late now to talk of that. Some members of this House favoured a wider gauge, but the majority insisted upon providing for the building of a 4-ft. 8½-in. line. The initial cost of the broader gauge line may be heavier, but it is more than counter-balanced by the advantages which a broad-gauge line affords. I saw the other day a picture of an electrically-drawn train load, representing a haulage of 3,000 tons, on a 4-ft. 8½-in. line. It is such loads that must be carried over our main lines. The wider gauge allows for

wider trucks, carriages, and engines, and thus permits of bigger loads.

The Minister, in introducing this Bill, did not refer, as I expected he would do, to the area of land on both sides of the east-west railway which has been handed over as a gift to the Commonwealth. I understand that a strip of land a quarter-of-a-mile wide—including the line itself—and stretching from Kalgoorlie to Port Augusta, now belongs to the Commonwealth. I did not expect the Minister to outline the policy of the Government in regard to that land when he was submitting this motion to the House, but I trust that an effort will be made to put it to some good use. The Government should come forward with a policy to provide for its development. I understood the Minister to say it would be possible to considerably shorten the railway journey by the construction of a line from Long Plains to Port Augusta, which would involve a cost of £1,250,000, and which line the State is willing to construct if the Commonwealth will finance it. If the Minister is negotiating for the construction of that line, I trust that he will provide for the adoption of the 5-ft. 3-in. gauge.

Mr. WATT.—That question is still open.

Mr. FENTON.—I do not know what sort of country that line would pass through, but if the South Australian Government is going to construct it, then I think that the Commonwealth should not only receive interest on the money which it finds for the purpose, but should have control of a strip of land on either side.

Mr. WATT.—I am told that a good part of the country is settled.

Mr. FENTON.—The House would have been glad to learn from the Minister the extent to which treated or powdered sleepers have been used in the construction of the east-west railway. If the ravages of white ants are as bad as some fear they will be, the untreated sleepers will have to be replaced in a short period.

Mr. FOWLER.—Powellised sleepers have not been proved to be effective. Speaking generally, there has been no satisfactory test.

Mr. FENTON.—What the honorable member says is that the test has not been sufficiently long to prove the effectiveness of the process.



Mr. HEITMANN.—In the north-west of Western Australia they have been tried over a period of seven years, and have proved satisfactory. According to reports, they are in excellent condition, whereas sleepers alongside of them that have not been so treated, are in a bad state.

Mr. FENTON.—That is interesting information. It is too late in the day to talk of any opposition to this line, and although I regret that the 5-ft. 3-in. gauge has not been adopted, I do not intend to oppose this Bill. In Committee, however, I hope that the clause relating to departmental employees will be so amended as to be made more definite. Many employees feel that their position in the service at the present time is somewhat precarious, and, while I am inclined to trust the management to a large extent, I am opposed to absolute government by regulation. The method of drawing up regulations under this Bill, and a direction as to what they should provide, ought to appear in the Bill itself. I have not been over the route, and do not know the country traversed, but I have heard lectures and read papers about its geological features, and understand that it is the opinion of experts that there flows beneath it, to an outlet in the Great Australian Bight, one of the greatest underground rivers in the world, which can be tapped by boring; and I am pleased to know that supplies have already been obtained by the putting down of bores. Although much of the bore water may be unsuitable for drinking and other purposes as it flows from the bore, it can, by chemical processes, be made as good as ordinary river water. I trust that further investigation will be made to discover water supplies. The Act permits Commonwealth officers to test the country beyond the strip granted for railway purposes, and if they find water in it, to use that water for the railway. In Committee, I shall move certain amendments, which I hope the Minister will accept; and, with this reservation, I now support the second reading of the Bill.

Mr. ARCHIBALD (Hindmarsh) [2.49].—I congratulate the Minister on the introduction of a useful piece of legislation. The Bill is an indication that, before long, the railway from Kalgoorlie

to Port Augusta will be completed, and its completion will give general satisfaction. The line is one of the longest that in recent years has been constructed in any part of the world, including South Africa, and it has been constructed under great difficulties, of which the ordinary public has no conception. We hear it objected that the line will not pay; but I should be inclined to question the sanity of any one who supported the proposal for its construction believing that the line would pay. Some persons have said that it would do well if it paid for the axle-grease used for the trains; but I think that it will do better than that. The construction of the line was undertaken partly in fulfilment of what was, if not a Federal compact, an understanding affecting Western Australia. Certainly the union of the States cannot be regarded as complete so long as travelling between Western Australia and the eastern States can be undertaken only by ocean-going vessels. Another reason for the construction of the line was the need for the connexion for strategical purposes. Let us consider some of the difficulties which the constructing authorities had to face. It requires some charity on my part to think that those responsible for the original estimate of cost showed business capacity or knowledge of affairs—though I shall not go so far as to say that they intended to deceive the community—when they allowed £4,000,000 for the construction of a length of 1,050 miles of railway, and proposed that the track should be unballasted, and a 60-lb. rail laid.

Mr. RICHARD FOSTER.—A 70-lb. rail.

Mr. ARCHIBALD.—The honorable member for Wakefield has complained that I and other members have not waded through all the papers compiled in connexion with this proposal. My reply to his criticism is that the span of human life is shorter now than it was in the time of Methuselah, and that it is, therefore, impossible for any man to read through the voluminous blue-books which are issued from time to time.

Mr. RICHARD FOSTER.—Provision was made for the ballasting of a certain portion of the line.

Mr. ARCHIBALD.—I think that the honorable member is mistaken in saying that. Those who come after us will never

have to construct a similar line under like conditions. My honorable friend is playing the rôle of Jerry Cruncher, the resurrection man.

Mr. RICHARD FOSTER.—For three years I have been trying to prevent wasteful expenditure.

Mr. ARCHIBALD.—I shall show that mistakes were made which could not be avoided. As I have said, it is difficult to think that the engineers-in-chief who made the original estimate of cost believed in their estimate. Does any man who possesses common sense and business knowledge think that over 1,000 miles of line could be built for £4,000,000 and left unballasted? The State authorities have each an efficient staff for the construction of railways; and are in a position to construct lines for themselves, or to have them constructed for them by contractors, according to their individual policies. They have in their service men of great professional knowledge and experience, with reputations to lose. But the Commonwealth, when this line was proposed, did not possess an engineering staff. I do not reflect on the engineering reputation of Mr. Deane. He may have been competent when a younger man to carry out a work of this character; but it was too big for him at the time of life when he engaged on it.

Mr. MCWILLIAMS.—It has been too big a job for any one who has had anything to do with it.

Mr. LAIRD SMITH.—The Canadian-Pacific railway was not too big a job for one man.

Mr. ARCHIBALD.—No; but it was constructed by a company that had a staff of engineers, and could, if it needed, go into the market and get others. The Commonwealth was not in a position to do that. It could not offer constant employment. The Governments of the States can attract first-class engineers to their service because they can promise permanent employment, but all that the Commonwealth could offer was employment during the period in which the line would be under construction. Consequently, we could get only young, inexperienced engineers, or wasters, and, as I once said, we might as well have put up the notice, "Rubbish can be shot here." Therefore what has occurred is not sur-

prising. The job was too big for Mr. Deane. To construct such a length of railway from both ends required an immense amount of preparation, which had not been completed when the work was started. No business concern would have commenced before it was ready, but a Government is always subject to pressure, which depends largely on the condition of the labour market, and the Commonwealth Government was being specially pressed by the Government of Western Australia, which had promised to connect its system with the Commonwealth line, although she knew that she would also have to build other railways for the purpose of opening up her own territory; therefore, this as a reason for not carrying out the agreement does not carry much weight with me.

Mr. FOWLER.—It may be an excuse, but not a reason.

Mr. ARCHIBALD.—The honorable member is perfectly right. I think that when our finances will permit it would be good policy on the part of this Parliament to request the Commonwealth Government to build the railway and leave it as a charge on Western Australia, to be recouped in time to come. Under similar circumstances I would suggest that the same course should be taken in regard to South Australia. The construction of this transcontinental line must have meant the expenditure of something like £2,000,000 in Western Australia; indeed, it must have proved one of the most prosperous industries that could possibly be started for the benefit of the State. It must be remembered that Western Australia made a splendid deal in regard to the supply of sleepers, the whole of which came from that State with the exception of a few from Tasmania. Further, all the water that was necessary in the work had to be paid for by the Commonwealth.

Mr. HEITMANN.—That was not unexpected.

Mr. ARCHIBALD.—Quite so; but I think that, in regard to the water, the Commonwealth might have been given more generous terms; at any rate, I know that when I was Minister for Home Affairs I felt I was paying a very good price. We were often told that in regard



to this railway the people of South Australia were "on the make"; but while a charge of that kind does not worry me, it would be interesting to look at the true position. The South Australian Government got no advantage from haulage over their lines, because all the material was sea-borne to Port Augusta, and the benefits were reaped by the shipping companies. The sole advantage, I suppose, gained by the South Australian Government was represented by the passenger fares paid by the railway employees on their way between Adelaide and the line. Western Australia, on the other hand, did remarkably well, and I think that now she ought to try to meet the Commonwealth by the construction of the road referred to as soon as possible. A great deal of bunkum has been talked about strategic railways by the honorable member for Cook and others. The only object that the honorable member mentioned had, I take it, was to talk to the gallery, with a view to creating a big wage fund for the workers of New South Wales and other parts of the country.

Mr. MAHONY.—Do you believe in low wages for the workers?

Mr. ARCHIBALD.—No, I believe in high wages. If I had my way the trans-continental line would have been constructed on the butt-gang system, with the wages fixed between the Engineer-in-Chief, on the one hand, and the representatives of the men on the other. It is a matter of no concern to us whether a man earns £5 or £10 a week, so long as he earns it; but there is a great difference in the case of a man who is paid £3 or £4 a week, and gives a return for only £1. My own opinion is that the workers of Australia, if they had a vote on the question, would be found to be in favour of the butt-gang system. When the conditions are such that a slow man can earn the standard rate of wage, it is highly desirable that, for instance, a young married man, with a family, who is in his prime, should take every chance of earning a little extra. There is a great deal of talk about liberty nowadays, but I ask where it is in this connexion. A decent worker in the country can do nothing for himself, but is called upon to do much for the benefit of a handful of wasters. Of course, the majority of our men are not wasters, but really good workers; indeed, I am sure that any of

our responsible engineers would say that three-fourths or nine-tenths of our men are good workmen, but that amongst them there are wasters of whom they cannot get rid. I am by no means an advocate of low wages, but I strongly object to the presence of wasters to the disadvantage of our real workers.

There is no necessity for me to deal with the difficulties that were met with in this great undertaking of the trans-continental railway. It may be said, however, that never was a Government so heavily handicapped as the Commonwealth Government has been in the conduct of this enterprise, and it is amazing to me that we have got through in the manner we have. We have to take into consideration the fact that we had the greatest "messenger" and most incompetent man as Minister for Home Affairs that ever cursed an Australian Government.

The Minister, by this Bill, asks the House to sanction the appointment of a Railways Commissioner, and I certainly think that this is a question that should be very carefully considered. We must have either a Commissioner or an Acting Commissioner, and at present the Engineer-in-Chief performs the duties of the latter office. I had something to do with his appointment, and, therefore, have a good idea of the reasons for it. There are very frequently conferences of Railways Commissioners, traffic managers, engineers-in-chief, and local engineers, and unless the Commonwealth has a Commissioner, or Acting Commissioner, our Engineer-in-Chief will not be competent to sit in conference with the Railways Commissioners from other parts of Australia. It will be agreed, I think, that our chief railway officer should not in any way be regarded as subordinate to the other railway officers of Australia, and it was for that reason the Engineer-in-Chief was appointed Acting Commissioner. I know that in making these remarks I am striking pretty rough ground, because the Minister for Works and Railways is credited with being a shrewd and able business man. However, I do not agree with his idea that we ought not to create a new office of Railways Commissioner. What work would such an official have to do? He is to operate a road which we know will not be a very paying one, and, even when

the connexion is made between Oodnadatta and the Katherine, we shall only be adding another railway that cannot be favorably regarded from a purely business point of view. When there are railways running through populous centres, as is the case in the States, it is necessary that there should be the best Railways Commissioners that it is possible to obtain at the requisite salaries. When a good man is secured, £1,000 or £2,000 is neither here nor there, because he can very quickly save his salary. On the other hand, if we pay a man £1,000 or £2,000, and he is only a £300 a year man, as sometimes occurs in public affairs, the case is very different. I cannot see any advantage in or any justification for appointing a first class Railways Commissioner in the case of the transcontinental line, and I suggest that the present Engineer-in-Chief, who is now doing the work, should be appointed as Commissioner. We know that this gentleman is one of the ablest engineers in Australia, and we are to be congratulated on enjoying the advantage of his services. It would be foolish to spend money on an appointment for which there is no necessity.

Of course, if I were speaking of any of the other railways in Australia I should not argue in this way; but, at the same time, we know that a lot of humbug is talked about Railways Commissioners. Without mentioning names, and leaving honorable members to fill in the details themselves, we know that there have been cases of Railways Commissioners being deprived of their office for what was considered the unsatisfactory conduct of the railways, and of their being succeeded by a real gold-edged official from England, Canada, Egypt, America, or elsewhere. The new man is shrewd, and when he comes out and looks round, he says to himself, "Well, I have got a job for five or seven years, and I must make hay while the sun shines; I must put up a record." The first thing he does is to reduce his repairs bill as much as he can. He tells the Government that the railways are in a terrible condition, and that he must have 100 locomotives or the world will come to an end. He gets those new engines, and he makes a saving in his repairs bill. He abolishes the whole of the portering staff on country stations, and slows down the

trains so that the guard can do the portering work. Then he says to the Government, "Consider what I have saved." At the termination of his engagement he disappears, and the old staff has to be brought in to do the belated repairs, and put things in order generally. Then the Department resumes at the old jog trot until the newspapers conclude that it is time to stir it up again, and get another foreigner imported. I have been watching the game for some years, and I am surprised that Parliament and the people do not see through it.

As a result of my observations of railway management in South Australia, I have come to the conclusion that the best railway commissioner is a traffic man, and if I were appointing a Commissioner, I would consider no one else. Railway management is a shrewd business, and a Commissioner can always get expert advice from his engineers. So far as we can see the Commonwealth Commissioner will have only three railways to operate, assuming that the Northern Territory line will be completed. If it is not, he will have a line with two dead ends, and if a business man were called in to manage a job like that it would drive him mad. We should not indulge in a lot of fireworks, because if we do the people will only be disappointed. They will say that, although we have this wonderful Commissioner, he has not improved the revenue. He cannot improve the pastoral country along the east-west line. The Government will do well to appoint an Acting Commissioner, and until conditions materially improve the Department should be carried on very much as it is at present. When the construction of this line is completed, there should be a tremendous reduction of the staff, because we shall not require the same number of men for working the line as for building it.

In regard to revenue, members from Western Australia and South Australia know the nature of the country through which the line will pass, and what may be expected from it. Honorable members may talk about the revenue not being satisfactory to commence with, but I believe that it will materially increase. I would not recommend the Government to look for any great results from oil wells which, we were told, are the product of former sea forests, but the railway will



have the result of opening up the country, and that is one of the best things we can do for Australia. If we can extend the railway from Oodnadatta northwards, every additional 100 miles of railway we construct will mean more stock trains, and afford opportunities for new areas of pastoral country to be taken up. Development of that character would be of great benefit to South Australia. All the leading pastoralists and graziers to whom I have spoken have urged the extension of the Oodnadatta line, so that they may be able to shift their stock to South Australia. Mr. Kidman, who is recognised as one of the ablest and shrewdest men in the cattle industry, informed me that, at times, he has shifted stock nearly half-way across Australia in order to put them on better country, and he had been well repaid for the expense. The pastoralists who will make money in future are those who have a certain amount of capital to operate upon, and are able to shift their stock when droughts and other causes necessitate that being done. The Nullabor Plain is good salt-bush country, and sheep will do well on it. That country can be profitably occupied if it is worked in conjunction with station properties in other parts of the country. The more country we can have occupied the more revenue there will be for the railway. Honorable members need not be pessimistic in regard to the revenue. It may be a long time before the railway is paying, but there is no reason why, in a few years, it should not be a much better revenue earning proposition than it can be at present.

Mr. WEST.—Would you put returned soldiers along the railway?

Mr. ARCHIBALD.—It is not a poor man's country, and it would be of no use to place returned soldiers there, or for the honorable member to recommend his Sydney friends to go upon this land in the hope of making a pile.

Another matter of considerable importance is the working conditions of the staff. There will be long stretches between the stations, and there will be certain *depôts* where engines will be changed. At those *depôts* there will be small aggregations of population. Naturally most of the staff will be anxious to be located at Port Augusta or Kalgoorlie, and it will be difficult to induce married men to accept employment at the more

isolated places along the line. Having regard to the conditions that will obtain at some of the smaller stations, I do not think we shall be doing credit to ourselves if we place women there, if we can possibly avoid doing so. My suggestion is that the Department should have a system of transferring officers every two or three months from the poor stations to the good ones, so that all may get an equal share of the advantages and disadvantages of the service. By that means the Commonwealth might be able to get an efficient and contented staff, but if some men are allowed to continually occupy positions at Port Augusta and Kalgoorlie, and at the *depôts*, whilst others are obliged to stay in less congenial surroundings, the management will not be employing the best method of dealing with its servants.

The question of classifications was raised by the honorable member for Wakefield. The explanation of the classification is very simple. The Commonwealth was commencing to build a new railway system, and we were getting together a staff for the railway. There were higher rates of wages in Western Australia than in South Australia, and a promise had been made to the engine-drivers, firemen, and cleaners, and to the traffic men, that they would be classified, so that they would know their status and their rates of pay. The conference took place during my administration of the affairs of the Department of Home Affairs. It was thought that it would be a very good step to hold one. The men were putting forward all sorts of extravagant ideas in regard to wages, evidently on the principle of the Cockney Jew who, in the first instance, asks a tremendous lot for his wares, so that the price will ultimately stand reducing by half; and it was essential that some principle should be fixed. The Governments of South Australia and Western Australia were anxious that a rate of wages should not be fixed by the Commonwealth Government that would attract their employees. The Government might have said, "There is the fixed rate of wages, take it or leave it:" but that policy would have led to strained feelings. I believe in holding these conferences. The Prime Minister has pursued the same policy in regard to shipbuilding. It is far better to go down and



talk with the men and make arrangements with them than to say, "We want so-and-so done. If you do not like to do it you can leave it." That sort of policy has always led to trouble. No Minister lowers his dignity by appointing one of his officers to confer with any of his staff for the purpose of coming to an understanding. It is another thing if he allows himself to become an animated rubber stamp, and to be practically dictated to by a trade organization, officially or unofficially. At any rate, the conference which met did a great amount of good.

I would like to refer to the question of strategic railways, of which mention has been made during this debate. One could hardly appeal to any military officer of any standing without his pointing out the strategic reason for the building of the east-west railway. Mr. Fisher was very strongly in favour of the policy of strategic railways, and I am a strong supporter of them. I know that we cannot go into matters of this character during the life of this Parliament, but if the war is over when the next Parliament assembles it should be one of the most important questions to be considered. The spending of money on arsenals will be useless until something is done in this direction. It would be impossible for a military officer to move 40,000 troops and their guns and equipment across Australia within a reasonable time with the breaks of gauge that now exist. When Mr. Fisher was Prime Minister a survey was made for a line from Brisbane to Port Augusta connecting with the New South Wales system at Hay and the Victorian system through Deniliquin and Echuca. By building that line we could move troops and their guns and equipment to Perth without having any break of gauge. Considerable objection was raised to the proposal. What would suit one State did not suit another. I was inundated with requests from New South Wales that the line should connect with Broken Hill; but what would be the strategic purpose served by that connexion? The object of our legislation is to educate our people to a higher plane. The time will come when the people of Australia will demand that this question of strategic railways shall be considered in spite of the objections of various States. The line proposed would not be

a military railway solely, which I considered it would be when it was first projected. To a leading grain merchant to whom I was speaking about it, I said that the weakest point was that it would be of no great advantage from a commercial point of view; but he said, "Do not make any mistake about that. The railway will be a paying concern because of its long hauls. It is roads with long hauls that are paying in America. The mistake in Australia is that we have no long hauls to the ports." This was a revelation to me. Looking at the matter from this aspect the strategic railway proposed will be worth considering from a commercial point of view.

We should build railways for strategic purposes on the principle adopted by the Czar Nicholas, who ruled in Russia when the first railways were built in that country. When his engineers asked him how he proposed to have them built, he took a ruler and drew a straight line from Moscow to a certain port, saying, "I want the railway to go that way." He did not want the railway to go in curves all over the place. I do not say that it is a sound policy to follow that principle absolutely. It would be sheer insanity if we did not make a detour at certain parts in order to run into better country; but if honorable members will look at the map that accompanied the report presented by Mr. Combes in reference to the strategic railway connecting Port Augusta with Brisbane, *via* Hay, and glance at the type of country that the line will pass through, they will see that there is a *prima facie* case made out from a commercial point of view for the building of the line, while at the same time it will follow the most direct route possible.

MR. RILEY.—What about the railway gauge?

—MR. ARCHIBALD.—The gauge will be the 4-ft. 8½-in gauge. In the abstract I am in favour of the South Australian gauge of 5 ft. 3 in., but the answer to the honorable member's question is the one that was given at the time the Bill authorizing the construction of the east-west railway was passed. It was shown that the advantage of the 4-ft. 8½-in. gauge was that it was the standard gauge of the world. I know that there are differences of opinion among the engineers as to which is the best gauge to adopt, and that some advocate a 6-ft. gauge, and



others a 6-ft. 3-in. gauge, while in Great Britain, in the case of the Great Western railway, a 7-ft. gauge was adopted, although it was taken up many years ago on the ground that it was considered to be unsatisfactory. But what I wish to lead up to is this: Twenty years ago there were about twenty different gauges in America, and they have now been reduced to about three or four, while they are all gradually working down to the 4-ft. 8½-in. standard. Again, in the Argentine, there were seventeen different gauges, and these are all being replaced by the 4-ft. 8½-in. standard. All this shows that there is a tendency amongst railway managers to adopt a uniform standard. One of the obvious reasons for this step is that the rolling-stock is on a standard

*Mr. Archibald.*

gauge, and if rolling-stock is urgently required it is simply a matter of cabling, and in normal conditions when there is no war in progress a duplication of the plant can be secured in a few weeks. In the nature of things that in itself justifies our adoption of the standard gauge, even though the 5-ft. 3-in. gauge of South Australia is a remarkably good one. I do not think that I need refer to any other matter at this stage. This is very largely a Committee Bill, and there will be ample opportunity to deal with various matters in detail when we reach the Committee stage.

Debate (on motion by Mr. HEITMANN) adjourned.

House adjourned at 3.46 p.m.



# Members of the House of Representatives.

*Speaker*—The Honorable William Elliot Johnson.

*Chairman of Committees*—The Honorable John Moore Chanter.

Abbott, General Percy New England Phipps, C.M.G. (N.S.W.)	Kelly, Hon. William Wentworth (N.S.W.) Henry
Anstey, Frank .. Bourke (V.)	Lamond, Hector .. Illawarra (N.S.W.)
Archibald, Hon. William Hindmarsh (S.A.) Oliver	Leckie, John William .. Indi (V.)
<sup>4</sup> Atkinson, Llewelyn .. Wilmot (T.)	Lister, John Henry .. Corio (V.)
<sup>4</sup> Bamford, Hon. Frederick Herbert (Q.) William	Livingston, John .. Barker (S.A.)
Bayley, James Garfield .. Oxley (Q.)	Lynch, John .. Werriwa (N.S.W.)
Best, Hon. Sir Robert Kooyong (V.) Wallace, K.C.M.G.	Mackay, George Hugh .. Lilley (Q.)
Blakeley, Arthur .. Darling (N.S.W.)	Mahony, William George Dalley (N.S.W.)
<sup>3</sup> Boyd, Hon. James Arthur Henty (V.)	Maloney, William .. Melbourne (V.)
Brennan, Frank .. Batman (V.)	Manifold, Hon. James Corangamite (V.) Chester
Burchell, Reginald John Fremantle (W.A.)	Mathews, James .. Melbourne Ports (V.)
Catts, James Howard .. Cook (N.S.W.)	Maxwell, George Arnot .. Fawkner (V.)
Chanter, Hon. John Moore Riverina (N.S.W.)	McDonald, Hon. Charles Kennedy (Q.)
Chapman, Hon. Austin .. Eden-Monaro (N.S.W.)	McGrath, David Charles Ballarat (V.)
<sup>4</sup> Charlton, Matthew .. Hunter (N.S.W.)	McWilliams, William Franklin (T.) James
Considine, Michael Patrick Barrier (N.S.W.)	Nicholls, Samuel Robert .. Macquarie (N.S.W.)
Cook, Right Hon. Joseph, Parramatta (N.S.W.) P.C.	Orchard, Richard Beau- Nepean (N.S.W.) mont
<sup>3</sup> Corsier, Edward Bernard Wide Bay (Q.) Cresset	Page, Hon. James .. Maranoa (Q.)
Falkiner, Franc Brereton Hume (N.S.W.)	Palmer, Albert Clayton .. Echuca (V.)
Sadleir	Pigott, Henry Robert Clare (N.S.W.) Maguire
Fenton, James Edward Maribyrnong (V.)	Poynton, Hon. Alexander Grey (S.A.)
Finlayson, William Fyfe .. Brisbane (Q.)	Riley, Edward .. South Sydney (N.S.W.)
Fleming, William Mont- Robertson (N.S.W.) gomerie	Rodgers, Arthur Stanis- Wannon (V.) laus
Forrest, Right Hon. Sir Swan (W.A.) John, P.C., G.C.M.G.	Ryrie, General Granville North Sydney de Laune, C.M.G. (N.S.W.)
Foster, Hon. Richard Wakefield (S.A.) Witty	Salmon, Hon. Charles Grampians (V.) Carty
Fowler, Hon. James Perth (W.A.) Mackinnon	Sampson, Sydney .. Wimmera (V.)
Glynn, Hon. Patrick Angas (S.A.) McMahon, K.C.	Sinclair, Hugh .. Moreton (Q.)
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Gregory, Hon. Henry .. Dampier (W.A.)	Smith, Hon. William Denison (T.) Henry Laird
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1. Deceased reported 14th June, 1917.

2. Elected 30th June, 1917. Sworn 11th July, 1917.

3. Sworn 11th July, 1917.

4. Appointed Temporary Chairman of Committees, 18th July, 1917.





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